

**THE CONTENTION OF SPACE IN CONTEMPORARY CUBAN AND
BRAZILIAN FILM**

By

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DEDICATION:

This dissertation is dedicated to my loving parents,
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ABSTRACT:

The purpose of this dissertation is to study women's representation and the contention of space in contemporary Brazilian and Cuban films, in order to analyze the way in which the films reflect societal values regarding gender roles and, consequently the way the nation is represented. The Cuban films I examine are: *Retrato de Teresa* (1979) and *De Cierta Manera* (1964), the short "Julia" from *Mujer Transparente* (1990) and from Brazil I work with the films *Gabriela* (1983) and *A Hora da Estrela* (1984.) All of the films have a protagonist that is a woman, and all were successful in the box office and had some international recognition. The films have strong female protagonists and share similar socio-political contexts- the socialist government in Cuba and the military dictatorship in Brazil, as well as a time period marked by social unrest as women's rights groups were very active in both countries. My hypothesis is that although these films were commercially successful, groundbreaking and innovative; they ultimately were marked by some of the gendered contradictions and the feminist questionings of their time. In fact, my analysis reveals that, although they each raise many issues and questions about an egalitarian society for both men and women, they fall short in terms of a progressive politics of gender. A notable exception, the film *A Hora da Estrela* provides a striking difference to the other films.

INTRODUCTION:

In general terms, what was at stake in Cuba's revolution in 1959 and the Brazilian dictatorship in 1964 was nothing less than the struggle to define the terms through which the country would be integrated into an increasingly global political economy. Although following different sociopolitical and economic models, Cuba and Brazil implemented structural adjustment policies that impacted all sectors of the population. As a means to gain support for the reforms and legitimize their presence in power, Fidel Castro and the military regime in Brazil employed populist strategies and nationalist policies in addition to arrests, murders, kidnappings, and censorship against those who criticized and opposed the regime. As in many other Latin American countries, the gendered dimensions of these policies had a strong impact on women's lives. This period was also marked by the increasing presence of films that would reflect on the state of the nation. Thus we have this study.

The purpose of this dissertation is to study women's representation and the contention of space in contemporary Brazilian and Cuban films, in order to analyze the way in which the films reflect societal values regarding gender roles and, consequently the way the nation is represented. To be more specific, the goal is to compare films produced both in Cuba and Brazil from 1960 to 1990's – a time characterized by a boom in film production. The study consists of two films selected from each country and an additional short is analyzed in the case of Cuba. One of the films is produced by a male director and one by a woman, and the short is directed by a woman. All of the films have a female protagonist, and all were successful in the box office and had some international recognition. The films have strong female protagonists and share similar socio-political contexts- the socialist government in Cuba and the military dictatorship in

Brazil, as well as a time period marked by social unrest as women's rights groups were very active in both countries. The films also hold similar dates of production. The contention of space for the female protagonists in the films to be analyzed is a reality often overlooked, and an important component to creating an egalitarian society. These years, in both countries, women's movements were not only involved in struggles for women's rights but also against racial discrimination. Interestingly, during these decades both countries produced a series of films with protagonists dealing specifically with women's struggles. My hypothesis is that these very commercially successful films, although groundbreaking and innovative, ultimately in many ways are differently marked by some of the gendered contradictions and the feminist questionings of their time. In fact, my analysis reveals that, although they each raise many issues and questions about an egalitarian society for both men and women, they fall short in terms of a progressive politics of gender. A notable exception, the film *A Hora da Estrela* provides a striking difference to the other films.

I choose to compare Cuba and Brazil not only because there are many similarities in the women's struggles in both countries, but also because there are many political and intellectual connections between the two countries. As we know, during the military dictatorship in Brazil in the 1960's and 1970's, many Brazilian leftist intellectuals fled their country and exiled in Cuba. In addition, we cannot forget that many of the exiled "terrorists" were women who forged networks with Cuban feminists. This fostered a level of intellectual and cultural exchange between the two countries that warrants further study. Since then, there have been films and cultural festivals involving artists from both countries.

Contributions to the field:

Although there has been some limited research conducted on the relationship between women and the contemporary film industry in Cuba, there have not been any studies comparing Cuba and Brazil's cinematic industry. Furthermore, to the best of my knowledge there have not been studies that examine the gendered spaces of contemporary Cuban and Brazilian films as proposed here. It is crucial to shed light on the way in which these films define and mediate the space of women in the narrative of the nation. The fact is that, in spite of the achievements of women's movements in both countries, there remain to be many problems concerning women's rights. Without understanding the way women have been represented and participated in films historically, we cannot comprehend current directions in contemporary Cuban and Brazilian film production. This is another aspect that makes this study imperative.

Overview of Chapters:

In chapter 1, I develop the theoretical approach to this research, based on the union of feminist and cultural geography. I argue for the necessity of a gendered understanding of the urban space in order to integrate those aspects of the nation that are usually neglected by an exclusive focus on men. For this reason, I begin with a literature review consisting of the first major scholars of feminist geography. I then revisit concepts that have contributed to the naturalization of gendered perceptions of urban space. Drawing from Gillian Rose, I discuss the concept of "landscape." Additionally, by drawing from Linda McDowell and Donald Mitchell, I discuss the meanings attributed to the spaces of the city and the household and the way in which these concepts reinforce discourses that attempt to organize and "naturalize" domestic labor and

the division between the public and the private spheres. Finally, I review the concept of belonging developed by Nira Yuval-Davis and I explain how this concept helps us understand the gendered discursive facet of “nation.” Then, employing the theoretical discussions by Chandra Mohanty on the necessity to reflect on links between women and their particular histories and geographies, I discuss unveiled systems of meanings and representation that have been responsible for the production and reinforcement of relations of power. Many of these questions posed by these feminist scholars are critical to this discussion because they enable one to explore the dialogue between women, sociopolitical agendas, and state policy.

Chapter 2 provides a brief overview of the historical context of the Cuban revolution and the military dictatorship in Brazil from 1960 to 1990. I also trace the progression and the nature of the women’s movements and the social and political improvements of the status of women in both Cuba and Brazil. In addition, I discuss the interrelation between the state and the cultural sphere in both Cuba and Brazil. The Cuban revolution achieved many gains for the film industry since, as Michael Chanan argues, in terms of the post revolutionary era, “they turned the cameras on the process they were living and told the Cuban people –and anyone else who was interested - who they were and what they were doing” (4). In the case of Brazil, I follow the development of the film industry and its correlation to the dictatorship beginning in 1964. I discuss the *Cinema Novo* movement and the methods that the Brazilian film employed as a response to their political reality. I analyze how women began to emerge as directors after the dictatorship and how they were able to question the dominant patriarchal norms and subvert traditional projections of Brazilian women in cinema.

The third chapter focuses specifically on Cuban cinema, and critically analyzes two Cuban films and a film short employing the aforementioned theoretical approaches. The first

film *De Cierta Manera* (1974), directed by Sara Gómez, follows a romantic relationship between a couple amidst a dramatic period of socio-economic change in post revolutionary Cuba. The second film *Retrato de Teresa* (1979), directed by Pastor Vega, presents the disintegration of a marriage as Teresa struggles to assert her rights as a revolutionary woman. The film short “Julia,” directed by Mayra Vilasís, comes from the film *Mujer Transparente* (1990), a collaboration of several up and coming Cuban directors; Hector Veitía, Mayra Segura, Mayra Vilasís, Mario Crespo, and Ana Rodríguez.

The first film that I have chosen to analyze is *De Cierta Manera*. Many have noted that the death of Sara Gómez robbed Cuba of one of its greatest film directors. Unfortunately she passed away after completing only one film. *De Cierta Manera* is significant not only because it is the sole Cuban film to date directed entirely by a woman, but also because of the nature of the film. Although Gómez clearly points to a socialist agenda, she blatantly critiques stereotypical “machista” gender roles and portrays the female protagonist Yolanda as strong and assertive at her place of employment and within the context of her relationship with Ramón. In many ways, Yolanda is the one who dictates the acceptable behavior within their relationship. Despite this, the image of an assertive woman seems to be transformed into a tool for the agenda of the nation, consequently limiting any true gains achieved for the status of women because the ultimate goal is the success of the nation-state and women are perceived merely as the vehicle towards the achievement of this objective.

The second film, *Retrato de Teresa*, follows the lives of Teresa and Ramón and stands out as a production with an agenda of critically analyzing the problems between gender roles in Cuban society. An important issue of the Cuban revolution was to eliminate sexism and to open opportunities for women in all aspects of Cuban society. The film is critical of this process and problematizes the fact that, although spaces have been created for women in the workforce, they

are not equal with their male counterparts because, in addition to being a hard worker in society, women remain solely responsible for household duties. The film addresses this double standard, and implies that for Cuban society to be truly revolutionary, it needs to be egalitarian and provide the same rights and opportunities that are given to women in the workforce, within the household as well. As a result of the analysis of space in the films, we will discuss the extent to which egalitarian ideas of the revolution actually create change in terms of the day to day reality of women as they are represented in the films. This production was very controversial in Cuba when it was released, nevertheless, it was a huge success in the box office, a fact that shows how the film struck a chord with a large part of Cuban society.

The third film is the short “Julia” from *Mujer Transparente*. The film is significant because aside from Sára Gómez’s film *De Cierta Manera*, it is the only other full length feature film not directed exclusively by a man. *Mujer Transparente* is a compilation of a series of shorts on the lives of different women in Cuban society. The women in each of the shorts are the protagonists, and each short begins with the name of the protagonist written onto the first sequence. The film is divided into five segments; Isabel, Adriana, Julia, Zoe and Laura. As implied by the title of the film, all of the women of different ages and circumstances are one way or another marginalized in their lives. The film provides a space for the intimate feelings and perspectives of these women and provides insight into the measures taken by these protagonists to confront their reality. Although this film was not as successful as the others in terms of distribution, it has laid the groundwork for emerging directors and provided a space for a new direction in Cuban Cinema. The short “Julia” was chosen because it dialogues well and provides some continuity with the film *Retrato de Teresa*, as both films trace the dissolution of what seemed to begin as a happy marriage. “Julia” presents the emotions and sentiments of a middle-

aged woman whose husband left her to have an affair with one of his college students. Julia informs the audience on their problematic relationship and she discusses the relationship from the confines of her home that on the one hand isolates her, but on the other hand provides her with safety, independence and agency. Julia labels the end of her marriage as the “failure of her life,” which seems to affirm while Julia is very independent, she still defines herself in relation to a man. Released approximately fifteen years after *Retrato de Teresa*, it seems as though the reality for Cuban women has changed on some levels, but not profoundly. By tracing the reality of two strong female figures in the process of divorce or separation, these films and the short point to a progression of awareness on the part of the protagonists who share the same socio-political context which face very similar constraints within the socialist Cuban system. In this study we will first reflect on *Retrato de Teresa* allowing us to comment more profoundly on a male director’s perspective on gender and space in comparison to a female director, and observe how these two film dialogue with each other.

The fourth chapter analyzes two Brazilian films that correspond with the Cuban films as they both have female protagonists. Both women leave the backlands – an arid region of northeastern Brazil. The film, *Gabriela*, was directed by Bruno Barreto in 1983 and is based on the novel of the same title written by Jorge Amado. The film takes place in 1925 in a small coastal Brazilian town. Gabriela is hired by the owner of a local bar to work as a live in cook. Shortly after being hired, she becomes his mistress, and years later she becomes his wife. The film shows the evolution and dynamic of their relationship and incorporates many elements that are part of the Brazilian foundational myth. It also “sells” an image of exoticism that presents how the film was marketed towards a male heterosexual as well as an international audience.

The second film *A Hora da Estrela* released in 1985, and directed by Suzana Amaral, is

based on the last novel written by Clarice Lispector in 1977. *A Hora da Estrela* centers around the character Macabéa, a young, poor woman who has moved to São Paulo from northeastern Brazil. She is employed as a typist but subsequently loses her job because of her clear lack of hygiene, efficiency and organization. The film follows Macabéa and all of her actions within the city. Although much has been published on this film, it will be interesting to analyze the dynamic of feminism and space as this is an approach that has not been taken thus far. This film is also pertinent to this study because it reflects the direction of contemporary Brazilian female film directors, that provides women with an active space both in front of and behind the camera. Furthermore, *A Hora da Estrela* is critical of many individuals who surround Macabéa, who manipulate and use her. To conclude, the film also comments on much of mainstream Brazilian society that has left few opportunities for rural immigrants that have come to urban centers as a means of survival, and have little success as exemplified with the case of Macabéa. *A Hora da Estrela* benefitted from successful distribution nationally and internationally and has received a significant amount of acclaim a fact that signifies that there is an alternative space for the kind of film that does not present the archetypal image of a Brazilian woman, but focuses on a rather clumsy and awkward young woman that cannot find her way or find acceptance.

The last chapter, Chapter five, is the conclusion where I discuss the impact that the selected films have had on the film industry and within the societies of both countries. Lastly, I will briefly discuss the new paths taken by female directors in both countries and what the future holds for women and the film industry in both Cuba and Brazil. Brazil has seen significant growth in the dissemination of films written and directed by women. On the other hand, Cuba has seen an increase in female directors over the years. Nevertheless, most of their films are not full length feature films and this limits the release of their work, and hinders the ability to reach

a broader audience within and outside of Cuba.

CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL APPROACH: FEMINIST GEOGRAPHY

“[F]eminism embraces all aspects of the emancipation of women and that includes collective struggles designed to elevate their status socially, politically, and economically; it concerns women’s self concepts as well as their positions within society.”

(Hahner xiii)

“[B]ecause good regional geography, and I suspect most good geography of any stripe, begins by looking ...”

(Hart 24)

This chapter will develop the theoretical approaches that will be implemented in the examination of women’s representation in films from 1960 to 1990 - a time period marked by sociopolitical and economic changes in Cuba and Brazil. I begin with a discussion of the necessity of a gendered understanding of the urban space and how this enables us to integrate those aspects of the nation that were neglected by the previous exclusive focus on men. If we are to assess a society and all the facets of daily life, it is imperative to account for the totality of the voices within the community. Thus feminist geography is an approach that becomes critical for gaining a deeper understanding of societal dynamics. For this reason, I will begin with a literature review consisting of the first major scholars of feminist geography. I will then draw from the theoretical discussions offered by feminist geographers and examine the applications of this approach on three intersecting levels. One way of applying feminist geography would be to examine the intersections of women and the nation. Another approach is to observe the dynamics of women within the city. The last level of analysis for feminist geography would be to study the realities and dynamics of women from within the household. These three intersecting levels of analysis are necessary because they enable us to begin with a broader understanding of societal dynamics by examining the role of women and the state, and then we can narrow down the

perspective and understand how state policies are brought to and questioned at the local level, specifically the household so that we can comprehend how day to day realities materialize. In other words, by integrating within their approach the many different levels and dynamics within society, feminist geographers can provide us with a more organic approach

As a result, this leads me to review key concepts in feminist geography. Drawing primarily from Gillian Rose, I discuss the concept of landscape to think critically on the representation of women in Cuban films. Additionally, with the insight of Linda McDowell and Donald Mitchell, I discuss how geography research has traditionally contributed to the naturalization of gendered perceptions of the urban space. Furthermore, I examine the meanings attributed to the spaces of the city and the household and the way in which these concepts reinforce discourses that attempt to organize and “naturalize” domestic labor and the division between the public and the private spheres. Or, as the quotes that initiate this chapter suggest, the goal is to develop new way of “looking” that helps problematize the geographical spaces traditionally allocated to women.

In dialogue with feminist geography, I review the concept of “belonging” by Nira Yuval-Davis and explain how this concept helps us understand the gendered discursive facet of the nation. The chapter will then examine the work of Caren Kaplan by investigating spatial dynamics within the household and the power relations between its members as well as the impact of new economic and political policies on the dynamics involving public and private spheres. Then, applying the theoretical discussions by Chandra Mohanty on the necessity to reflect on links between women and their particular histories and geographies, I discuss unveiled systems of meanings and representation that have been responsible for the production and reinforcement of relations of power. I conclude by connecting these concepts to Michel

Foucault's theories of discourse and the *régime* of truth. I argue that the *régime* of truth allows for a better understanding as to how women are relocated to the narrative of the nation in a time of transition by understanding the spatial dynamics that surround the protagonists. Consequently, the analyses go above and beyond a methodology that merely discusses power relations or political and economic systems.

1.1 Feminist Geography: Literary Review

Feminist geography as a whole did not begin to receive attention until the early eighties, although some early works were first published in the mid seventies. Feminist geographers shed light on the relationship between gender and place as they emphasized that in order to create a just and equitable society, it is necessary to account for how women interact with certain spaces in society. In the book *Geography and Gender*, first published in 1984, the authors question the importance of studying feminist geography. They note that historically most scholarship on cultural geography discusses 'man and culture, and man and environment' but they fail to include women into their research (19).

One of the first scholars to notice this discrepancy was Alison M. Hayford, in 1974, noted that female roles within societies warranted further research, and that merely examining women "in terms of their adjustment to male dominated order" was not enough (20). Another important article written by Jacqueline Tivers in 1978 states that geographers need to study women's perceptions and behavior within society and they need to eliminate their patronizing attitude towards scholarship on women. Other works on feminist geography began to emerge in the early 1980's by authors such as Janice Monk and Susan Hanson (1982) and Wilbur Zelinsky, Janice

Monk and Susan Hanson (1982) whose research examines how current geographical studies during that time period failed to analyze the effect of women's inferior economic and social status in societal dynamics and how this important aspect of accurate geographical research was critical in the analysis and assessment of any society or region.

One example is the book *Geography and Gender* whose goal and I think much scholarship of feminist geography is to put forth a criticism that a society with commitment "both towards the alleviation of gender inequality in the short term and towards its removal through social change towards real equality in the longer term is fundamentally what will leave positive lasting effects on society" (21). This perspective highlights not only ideals in feminist geography in general but those of feminist scholarship across disciplines which also holds this philosophy. Specific to feminist geography, the book echoes the aforementioned geographers of the seventies and eighties who emphasized the importance of studies that provide an accurate reflection of the societies they are analyzing. The authors of *Geography and Gender* argue that in order to do this it is critical to understand the importance that gender plays within a functioning society. They feel that it is necessary to understand all of the patterns and structures that exist in society. In the article, "Doing Gender: Feminism, Feminists and Research Methods in Human Geography," Linda McDowell notes that a prominent reason for the exclusion of gender in geographical research is due to the methodology implemented in research. According to her work, women are excluded from research on many levels. There is a lack of statistical information pertaining to women in society, and there is little information that differentiates women from their family and that accurately records their waged labor as well as their 'unpaid' labor. This is significant because the result is that "the internal power relations within the household remain unexamined" (McDowell 105). Another obstacle is the fact that some

researchers who began their studies including women often wind up eliminating them from the final conclusions of their study. According to McDowell, this seems to stem from the problems that some researchers encountered when trying to “assign a class location to women” as women are found in many sectors within society and are difficult to categorize (105). Additional problems with some of the research methodologies implemented are the structure of how interviews have been questioned. According to Duelli Klein, male researchers may privilege male respondents. This perspective notes that the most accurate research may be “a methodology that allows for women studying women in an interactive process that will end the exploitation of women as research objects” (107). I find this statement problematic, because it assumes that only women can conduct accurate research on female subjects through interviews; when in reality, this does not occur and is a very simplistic and binary criticism of problematic research. Complete objectivity by an interviewer is an issue that pertains to both male and female researchers. By limiting this kind of scholarship solely to women, one limits the field and research of feminist geography as a whole and creating another form of discrimination within the field.

1.2 Revisiting concepts: Landscape, the City and the Household

This debate has led to the problematization of concepts taken for granted until then. This is the case of Gillian Rose who took as a starting point for consideration the concept of landscape. The author argues that landscape is fundamental to geography because it is a “formulation of the dynamic relations between a society or culture and its environment, the process of human activity in time and area” (193). She also emphasizes how the word landscapes encompasses “the relation between the natural environment and human society” (193). The problem that is

evident in examining landscapes is the recurrent tendency to equate the female body with the beauty of nature. According to Rose, this is an aspect that can historically be seen in landscape geography. The scholar discusses how as a result of this practice there is the ‘feminization’ of what is being observed consequently by the dominant view of white heterosexual males.

The necessity of revisiting this concept derives from the fact that “a landscape is a cultural image, a pictorial way of representing, structuring or symbolizing surroundings, whether written or painted, grown or built ... a landscapes meanings draw on the cultural codes of the society for which it was made” (Rose 195). This means that the landscape consequently is filled with symbols or ‘codes’ that represent ‘social power structures’ and exemplify the interconnectedness of nature, culture and the society. Rose’s critique of the concept of landscape opens new venues in the analyses of cultural productions, because it allows us to problematize the interactions between different actors within society related to where they are located physically and symbolically, and how this affects the socio-political system as a result. By doing this, we can critically examine discursive structures of meaning which accentuate certain forms of representation as naturally constitutive of the narrative of the nation or of any other “imagined community” of individuals as it will be discussed in the following chapters. We cannot forget that, as Teresa de Lauretis rightly argues, films have functioned as a technology of gender portraying within a stereotypical vision the ‘correct’ and adequate spaces for men and women. For instance, women are traditionally represented in and around the home caring for the family, while men are presented at the workplace and within the city of the community. It is important to revisit this concept of landscape by incorporating the members of the community into the analysis because in addition to mountains and buildings, men and women constitute an element

to this interpretation - mostly because, as various feminist scholars point out, the gendered understanding of the nation has limited an accurate assessment of societal dynamics.

This discussion leads us to the necessity of reviewing the dynamics between gender roles and the urban spaces within a given society. Upon revisiting interpretations of a region's landscape and incorporating gender roles into this inscription, it is also crucial to read for the relations between men and women within urban spaces. Urban spaces are significant not only because most of the films to be analyzed (except for *Gabriela*) occur in major urban centers, but they are spaces that have had two separate roles in terms of women's struggle from a patriarchal discourse. In fact, the design and meanings attributed to urban spaces can contribute to the reinforcement of the 'correct' spaces for women and ultimately lead towards an attempt of a controlled inclusion of women into the work force, promoting some forms of agency and autonomy for this group.

Elizabeth Wilson is one of the scholars who has been concerned with the dynamic between gender roles and urban spaces. When employing a historical approach, Wilson states that, in central Europe in the early twentieth century, what existed was predominantly a male consciousness where the thought was that the space outside the home was considered a space to pursue sexuality without constraints of the family. She elaborates on this idea by explaining that women's presence outside the household within the city in any shape or form was considered problematic. This was in fact due to the notion that one could find the "forbidden" within the city, i.e., what is most feared and most desired becomes possible in the city. For Wilson, this sentiment implied that the kind of women who were available to men within these spaces were varied; they could be the temptress or the prostitute, the "fallen woman or the lesbian;" or on the other hand they could also be "the virtuous woman who triumphs over temptation and

tribulation” (280). It is then further argued that the city in some ways is a threatening place for men, while it can in many ways be quite liberating for women because it is a space that can provide women with some level of autonomy and freedom outside the household (281).

The relationship between gender roles and the spaces of the city can provide us with new insights in terms of women’s status and the possible meanings that space can produce. In fact, as Wilson seems to imply, the meanings produced by space are dictated by the way individuals engage with these spaces. Although these sentiments are not contemporary per se, they can help us understand the way certain imaginaries persist in the perception regarding women and the city as represented in the films to be analyzed. Wilson furthermore discusses that many feminist scholars have focused on negative criticism of the positive contributions of urban spaces historically, regarding its effects on women. She notes that many feminists concerned with these issues often focus solely on issues of safety, welfare and protection. These three problems if anything accentuate women as victims of the city and receptors of a power system that controls them, without tackling deep seated structural problems. On the other hand, Wilson notes the necessity to also emphasize the other side of city life, and to insist on women’s right to the city, and that even when there are risks within the city one can remain to be:

both pro-cities and pro-women, to hold in balance an awareness of both the pleasure and the dangers that the city offers women, and to judge that in the end, urban life, however fraught with difficulty, has emancipated women more than rural life or suburban domesticity. (283)

The city then, though problematic on many levels for women, overall has become an area that has provided space and opportunity for women. Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that women’s

integration in urban/metropolitan areas has also meant facing other forms of sexism, racism, and violence. To illustrate it, we can refer to the types of jobs allocated to women or the continuous difference in earning power between men and women for equal jobs.

The inequality affecting women's integration in the labor market has been discussed by various feminists. Nancy Harstock, for instance, critiques the prominent cultural geographer David Harvey when she underlines that primitive accumulation is noticeably affected by gender. According to Harstock, in the economic sector, there are different "consequences for men and women and different possibilities for both economic and political participation by men and women" (170). The scholar defines "primitive accumulation" by using Marx's definition: "primitive accumulation is the series of processes by which capital becomes concentrated in fewer and fewer hands in Western Europe between the fifteenth and eighteenth century." Harstock then emphasizes that the accumulation of capital is not by any means gender neutral but rather "on the backs of women" resulting from women's exploitation and the limitations of possibilities that are readily available to women. This is significant because it brings us current with contemporary society where women's domestic work remains unaccounted for. And, as discussed previously, women's increased insertion in the labor market by different forms and degrees of inequalities results in a double workload most women are obliged to endure.

Harstock's view is that primitive accumulation, because of the gendered dynamics in the equation, converts women's reality to being both extrinsic and intrinsic because women globally exist outside of the capitalist market in other sectors of society (177). She also emphasizes that the current theorizations of globalization need to recognize that women are becoming more and more visible in the "wage-labor force worldwide." The connection here then is that the notion of globalization should be discussed in conjunction with a moment of primitive accumulation that is

simultaneously a moment of the feminization of the labor-force resulting in workers who have less rights and are as she states “denigrated, made powerless, invisible and unreal” (179). Further along these lines, the net result of primitive accumulation is that the poor are left poorer while the wealthy increase their wealth. An interesting statistic that documents this fact is that over the past thirty years worldwide the divide between the upper and lower class has increased substantially. According to Manuel Castells, “the poorest 20% of the world’s people have seen their share of income decline from 2.3% to 1.4% while the share of the richest 20% has risen from 70% to 85%” (qtd. in Hartstock 182).

Hartstock concludes by presenting the dichotomy of women globally entering the work force. On the one hand, women are liberated from some of the traditional patriarchal restraints; nevertheless, on the other hand, they are drawn into a capitalist workforce and included in “global/transnational processes” on asymmetrical terms (188). This point is important because it echoes a major theme of this project in which we see women in both Cuba and Brazil who are inserted into their local economy and they fit into the category as those bearing the burden of primitive accumulation. Although there are also men present suffering from primitive accumulation, women’s reality differs from theirs because women have an additional workload as mothers and wives which supersedes that of the males in this category. Women’s additional work is usually ignored, devalued, and excluded from statistics as well as the political economy.

Although the awareness of obstacles for women has increased in the last decade, scholars such as Liz Bondi argue that gender issues in general have in actuality never received any significant amount of attention. Bondi constructs her argument by referring to a number of studies of postmodernism including that of David Harvey that fails to incorporate questions of gender into their argument. For example, she notes how Harvey uses illustrations of women in

his analyses of postmodern culture but fails to dialogue with these images by ignoring women's issues. Furthermore, Harvey's discussion of postmodernity and inequality of the middle class according to Bondi also does not include differences in gender which concern issues of societal inequality. She asserts that postmodernism has been asserted as an "intrinsically geographical project" thus it is connected to feminist reactions to postmodernism (77).

Bondi, however, as well as other feminists such as Bell Hooks notes that postmodernism in fact complements feminist critiques of patriarchy because "Postmodernism diagnoses a crises in the authority of Western intellectual thought and culture, and responds by attempting to recover and recuperate that which the associated meta-narratives exclude" (77). She also notes the connection between "knowledge/non knowledge, representable/non representable and masculine/feminine as entwined with issues of time and space." These issues are intertwined because, by failing to acknowledge the significance of limitations for women and their roles and/or contributions to society, these scholars perpetuate hegemonic discourses. In other words, they fail to question the very structures they sought to critique.

The scholar Susan Hanson discusses the future of geographic methodology in the article "As the World Turns: New Horizons in Feminist Geographic Methodologies." Hanson questions precisely what it is that feminist geographers are trying to understand and she notes the underlying issue to be on the "intersections of gender, space, and place-questions of how gendered identities, and the unequal power relations embedded in those identities, shape distinctive places and how, in turn, gendered experiences and identities are molded by space place and geography" (121). One important approach that Hanson highlights is based on the work developed by Ann Oberhauser and Isabel Dyck that points to the importance of maintaining sensitivity towards unequal power relations on the part of the researcher and those

who are being researched (122). In terms of applying this critique towards the analysis of films, it is important to be aware of the space that one inhabits. A Western feminist perspective cannot always be applied towards the analysis of a non- Western nation because their reality is completely different. There are some common struggles but there are also many which are not, and this needs to be accounted for.

Ann M. Oberhauser offers a fine example of this in her article “The Home as ‘Field’ Households and Homework in Rural Appalachia.” This article parallels an important topic of much of the work analyzed in this study which is the value of female labor in the household. Oberhauser discusses the importance of incorporating a feminist methodology into “hidden” activities i.e. “housework” (which encompasses maintaining the household as well as the family), and she underlines how these activities incorporate an entrepreneurial nature of all of the women in the study who are maximizing their profits by running small business from their homes. Oberhauser calls these circumstances of *strategic* importance (166). The term strategic recognizes that women are often engaging in work within the confines of the household and are “negotiating their time and space to accommodate various activities and their multiple roles in the household” (166). The results from the study are relevant nationwide and provide insight into the household dynamics within society since “[t]hese analyses demonstrate the integral connection between activities in the home and the workplace, arguing that the home is a site where capitalism and patriarchy intersect” (169).

Domestic work is commonly unaccounted for, and is traditionally undervalued and misunderstood. However, it is important to verify the way women are re-signifying their insertion into the domestic space and how it affects the family dynamics. Many of the women in West Virginia had felt a sense of empowerment by economically contributing to the household

with their entrepreneurial work from home, even if this contribution was only 20-30% of the total household income. Another issue that resonates well with the focus of this study is the fact that many of the spouses of these women who were entrepreneurial, had, in many cases, reacted negatively to their wives endeavors. Their response was that these women were at home and their focus was to be on the family and the household, not for instance, their quilting business. This attitude is significant because it captures how patriarchal discourses are perpetuated within the household and they contribute to economic policy that further undervalues the double workload of most of the women in the West Virginia study. These women's social-economic contributions are invisible and undervalued by the state, and for many they are invisible to their spouses who resent a slightly disorganized house due to the extreme multitasking implemented on a daily basis by most of these women. In any case, however, it contributes to a sense of empowerment that may lead to the construction of new meanings.

This perspective is important because it allows me to more clearly analyze the dynamics of the household in the films *Retrato de Teresa* and *Gabriela*. In the case of the first film, Teresa's work is virtually ignored by her husband and understood by him to be solely her responsibility, while she is struggling to balance her work at home with her work in a textile factory. The film *Gabriela* focuses on the relationship between a domestic worker and her employer and the sexual dynamic that is created between the two characters within the household in which Gabriela works and they both reside. In terms of the other films, this issue is still present in the way the protagonists question their own identity and their marriage. Given the fact that the films were produced from 1960-1990, it is clear that this issue is still troubling many women.

Don Mitchell offers another approach to understanding the dynamics within the household by discussing how space and gender are affected by the spatial layout within the home. He shows how the spatial organization can reinforce or displace certain gender roles and dynamics. The beginnings of these tendencies can be traced to the beginnings of the industrial era where the family was designated as a private issue but by that same token it was privatized. So we then have domestic labor which is solely done by the women of the household. This is an interesting point because it provides some historicity to the gendered divisions within the home. Mitchell also notes that women's inequality is not completely based on their limitations and constraints in the home. There are other sets of "structural features" which reinforce women's inequality that can be found in the landscape of an area. Furthermore, Mitchell cites the idea of K. Nelson who affirms the argument of "spatial entrapment" where the woman is physically limited in the amount of spaces and/ or areas she may enter. This limitation is dictated by the daily responsibilities that are typically allocated to women. Because the women are responsible for working, taking children to school, and being available in either sickness or injury, the proximity of the home is likely to be shortened because of these constraints. The net result is that women function and interact on a smaller scale than men do for the most part. As a result of this entrapment, women have less bargaining ability.

An example of this would be of a mother who works an eight hour job and is responsible for taking her child to and from school, and for preparing home meals at the beginning and end of the day. If for some reason say, because of corporate setbacks this mother loses her employment, there is a limited area in which she could attain employment that would allow her sufficient time to move back and forth to the school, and her place of work from the family's home. Another consequence of 'spatial entrapment' is that because she has so many time

constraints, she has fewer opportunities to create many ties with the community during the week. She may have fewer connections and be more isolated. These connections might have otherwise assisted her in finding a new employer after losing her job. The result is that many women become a source of inexpensive highly-educated and skilled labor. This concept can easily be applied to the women in the case study of Western Virginia in the sense that, as a consequence for being the sole caregivers of the family, they needed to become entrepreneurial as a means to enhance their socio-economic situation. This is an option that, nevertheless, can allow them some spaces for resistance and empowerment as previously discussed.

As we will see in several of the films to be analyzed from both Cuba and Brazil, we are presented with female protagonists who are functioning within a society that has experienced some positive change in terms of women's rights. Some of these changes stem from new dynamics regulating the entry of women into the workforce that enabled women to be integrated into society and gave them some levels of autonomy by having their own income. Among other things, these optimistic transformations stem from the emergence of new policies pertaining to the integration of women into the workforce in a period of transition as it will be discussed in the following chapter. It is important, however, to assert that these changes are still marked as discussed previously by asymmetrical differences in equality for women in contrast to men. Female roles are, on one hand, liberated by having a disposable income, and the independence to determine when and where they will spend their capital. On the other hand, there are constraints within the household. While the dynamic outside the home is changing, daily life within the household remains almost unchanged. It is this double burden that women have had to systematically endure. As it will be discussed in the following chapter, in Cuba, women's emancipation was part of the revolutionary agenda. The necessity to create a more equitable and

just society meant the integration of women into the workforce. The film *Retrato de Teresa* is at the forefront discussing this predicament; because it presents the reality of a woman that is not egalitarian to that of a man, specifically her husband. This is also more significant because it portrays Teresa's life *after* the Family Code of 1974 was created. The Family Code was designed to address the disparity between the calls for equality in the workplace and in the home where both members are legally required to help with domestic responsibilities. Unfortunately this law was difficult to enforce and as *Retrato de Teresa* explains, societal beliefs and practices may not be changed immediately. As we will see in *Mujer Transparente*, many of the same issues, which appeared in the earlier generations shortly after the revolution, are still present ten years later in the next generation.

1.3 Women and the Nation

Two scholars who analyze the intersections of the nation and the state are Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias. They discuss that “central dimensions of the roles of women are constituted around the relationships of collectivities to the state.” They also claim that “central dimensions of the relationships between communities and the state are constituted around the roles of women” (1). This assertion is quite significant because it implicates women as key actors in the implementation of state policy in terms of their relationship with the community. A clear example of this is when Cuba incorporated women into the workforce as part of the revolutionary ideals. The creation of this policy and the liberation of women from the home nevertheless was not their primary objective. Economically, it was advantageous to have women outside the home if Cuba were to try to steer away from its prior existence as a nation dependent

solely on sugar exports. Women would play an important role in the diversification of Cuba's economy.

The scholars identify five ways which trace how women have tended to participate in the project of the nation: 1) Women are seen as biological reproducers of members of ethnic collectivities; 2) Women are seen as reproducers of the boundaries of ethnic and national groups; 3) Women are seen as participating centrally in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and as the transmitters of its culture; 4) Women are signifiers of ethnic/national categories; and 5) Women are participants in national, economic, political and military struggles (7). This last point can easily be seen in Brazil where women were struggling economically began to organize and form collective groups with the intention of negotiating with the government for basic needs such as running water and electricity as we will discuss in the following chapter. Another perspective on women, space and nation can be seen in Nira Yuval-Davis in "Belonging and the Politics of Belonging." According to Yuval-Davis, this concept is important because a sense of belonging on many levels contributes to many societal relations:

People can belong in many different ways and to many different objects of attachments ... Even in its most stable primordial forms, however, belonging is always a dynamic process, not a reified fixity, which is only a naturalized construction of a particular hegemonic form of power relations. To simplify our understanding of the notion of belonging, it would be useful to differentiate between three major analytical levels on which belonging is constructed. The first level concerns social locations; the second relates to individuals' identifications and emotional attachments to various collectivities and groupings; the third relates to ethical and political value systems with which people

judge their own and others' belonging/s. These different levels are interrelated, but cannot be reduced to each other... (199).

This article underlines the desire for attachment by individuals and groups and how these desires ultimately lead to a political dynamic that can make or resist state policy or societal paradigms.

Drawing from Benedict Anderson's vision of nation as "imagined communities," Yuval-Davis points to a series of practices and discourses that contribute to the production of the sense of belonging.¹ According to the author, the individual's sense of belonging and sense of community is felt internally, and although taken as something natural, it is a desire constructed by society. It is this internal sense of statehood and community that drives and attempts to justify much of state and national policy that may be detrimental to women, minorities and those of lower socio-economic classes. As Yuval-Davis argues, "Much of contemporary debates on the politics of belonging surround that question of who 'belongs' and who does not, and what are the minimum common grounds- in terms of origin, culture and normative behavior-that are required to signify belonging" (207). In terms of women, this concept is crucial in order to think critically about the notion of place and space. Where exactly is it acceptable for a woman to be, and what types of daily activities are acceptable within the confines of society? What type of behavior is "acceptable" and thus belongs within that society? This sense of belonging, consequently, is what drives many behaviors and dynamics within a given community, therefore, belonging seems to be a human desire based on values super imposed by dominant society.

¹ Yuval-Davis also cites Benedict Anderson's vision of nation states as "Imagined Communities" where all of the individuals of a particular nation feel a sense of community without the possibility of ever knowing all of the individuals of their *nation*.

As we can see, the sense of belonging plays a central role in the social conditioning through which individuals learn to conform to specific scripts-modes of subjectification that are “performatively constituted” to which Judith Butler refers (25). As we will see in the films, women often are requested to “perform” the roles that their nation and their society have deemed appropriate, and constitute the “appropriate” behavior. This movement results in the imposition of a symbolic system that attempts to materialize and consolidate a *régime* of truth about the individual as discussed by Michel Foucault. Stuart Hall presents Foucault’s concepts when he states:

Subjects may produce particular texts, but they are operating within the limits of the episteme, the discursive formation, the *régime* of truth, of a particular period and culture ... The subject of discourse cannot be outside discourse. It must submit to its rules and conventions, to its dispositions of power/knowledge. The subject can become the bearer of the kind of knowledge which discourse produces. It can become the object through which power is relayed. But it cannot stand outside power/knowledge as its source and author. (79)

These concepts of power in relation to the subject can be applied to Cuba and Brazil as two states under the imposition of socialist (in Cuba) and authoritarian rule. Women in both of these countries are as Hall states, “submitted to the rules and conventions” of power/knowledge. As we shall see, a clear example of this can be seen when Margaret Randall speaks of the process involved in the education of Cuban women who learned skills in community meetings, but they were also taught the fundamental ideology of the revolution in conjunction with sewing and reading lessons. Women in this example are then the receptors of state policy and of power/knowledge.

This process of production of the subject can help us understand Yuval-Davis's comment on the performative nature of belonging. Considering belonging in this way permits us to explore "specific repetitive practices, relating to specific social and cultural spaces, which link individual and collective behavior, as crucial for the construction and reproduction of identity narratives and constructions of attachment" (Yuval-Davis 203). These concepts will allow me to examine the way in which the films construct a sense of belonging in a society where women are increasingly struggling for new spaces. The performative nature of the sense of belonging and its crucial role in the constitution of a sense of collective and individual identity is important if we keep in mind that:

One major discussion of nationalist projects to be related to gender relations is the genealogical dimension which is constructed around the specific origin of the people (or race) (Volknation). The myth of common origin or shared blood/genes tends to construct the most exclusionary/homogeneous visions of the nation. Another major dimension of nationalistic projects is the cultural dimension in which the symbolic heritage provided by language and/or religion and/or other customs and traditions is constructed as the essence of the nation (Kulturnation). (21)

As the scholar argues, nations are discursive constructs that, embedded with beliefs, values, and needs shaped by dominant white male segments, attempt to transform particular views into universal and natural ones. It is this false perception of the naturalness of the bonds responsible for one's membership to a national imagined community that needs to be questioned. As the examples discussed until now show, although we cannot deny that this vision of the nation has contributed to the entrapment of women within certain definitions of femininity and certain spaces, this does not mean that women have passively accepted the little space granted to them.

As we will see in the following chapters, there is an active presence of women in the cultural and public spheres, they struggle for a venue through which they can participate, debate and formulate their own alternatives to the dilemmas during times of transition.

Significantly, the necessity to redefine relations of power at the interpersonal and institutional level forces us to understand how different kinds of space are used for different actions and by different actors. As Don Mitchell states when referring to Lyn Staeheli's study: "Instead of understanding both spaces and actions as existing along the same public to private continuum, we need to see how the public or private nature of spaces may not vary together, this systematic representation makes it clear that public actions can take place in private places and vice versa." However, the urge to create alternative meanings for spaces in order to create new possibilities of belonging needs to take into consideration the fact that:

Any naturalization of analytic categories such as "woman" that are supposed to have cross-cultural validity ends in a mystification of difference, more particularly in the production and reproduction of discourses of difference between men and women, between women, and certainly between countries and peoples. Euro-American discourses of "global feminism" have naturalized and totalized categories such as "third world women" and "first world" women. (Kaplan 162)

In other words, we have to avoid the idea of producing new spheres of exclusion. In the case of the films to be analyzed, all of the female protagonists are projected as individual actors either defying or upholding the patriarchal discourse. In the context of Cuba and Brazil, it is important to keep in mind that both countries were experiencing a period of huge socioeconomic transition and political transition, in which the metaphor of the nation occupied a central role, resulting in

the importance of the question of belonging. It will be interesting to observe how different films and directors respond to this question in different historical moments. It is important to notice how traditional values regarding the family are incorporated into this nuanced narrative of the nation while keeping in mind what is once again excluded.²

As I have attempted to demonstrate throughout the theoretical discussion and literature review in this chapter the work of feminist geography and feminist studies concerned with the question of gender, sexuality, and the nation as well as gender and spaces within the city and the household are critical tools for understanding how gender intersects with the social-political dynamics within its society. Women historically have been left out of many research agendas particularly in Cultural Geography; this project hopes to minimize this disparity by underlining the relevance and importance of feminist studies as well as feminist geographical studies.

For this reason, it is important to revisit concepts such as landscape, household, and the nation since so doing allows us to problematize the way women have been portrayed in cultural artifacts in Cuba and Brazil. This approach allows us to question discourses of equality in Cuba as well as the emphasis on modernization in Brazil that did not bring the profound changes for women that were sought after originally. In the following chapters, I implement these concepts to study the dynamics of the nation, the city and the household in *Retrato de Teresa*, I also examine the gendered interactions of the nation and the city within the film *De Cierta Manera* in Cuba, and one sequence in *Mujer Transparente* to analyze the interactions of the nation and the household in this Cuban film. In the Brazilian film *Gabriela*, I will examine the intersections of the nation, the household and the northeast community in which the film takes place. The last

² Although outside of the scope of this study, for future research it will be interesting to examine films that integrate the element of race to the struggle for space and an egalitarian society, since according to Kaplan not all women's issues are homogeneous. The Brazilian film *Xica Da Silva* (1976) would provide for an interesting analysis on the negotiation of power, space, and women's rights.

film, *A Hora da Estrela*, will allow me to study gender roles and their dialogues with the nation and urban society, and its tension with discourses of modernization and spaces of marginalization. I hope to prove that despite that fact that all of these films employ a female protagonist and that some of them were directed by women; many (not all) of the films reinforce their nation's agenda in terms of a politics of gender.

Before focusing on the films, the following chapter will trace how a political, social and cultural consciousness that emerged in the 1960's took hold in Cuba and Brazil. I will examine the sociopolitical and cultural contexts in which the films emerged, then illustrate the "new" positioning assumed by some of the directors whose works will be analyzed in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER 2: REVOLUTION, WOMEN, AND CINEMA: A BRIEF PORTRAYAL OF CUBA AND BRAZIL

This chapter will trace the social and political climates in Cuba and Brazil from 1960-1990, the nature of the women's movements in both countries during this time period as well as the evolution of the cinematic industry of both countries. These elements in their entirety are critical to this study because they are all interconnected. In order to implement a feminist geographical approach in the analysis of the films, it is imperative to understand the contexts in which these films are created from 1960-1990. The socio-political and economic histories together with the filmic histories of Cuba and Brazil set the stage for a deeper understanding of the environments in which the films were produced and the societies which they portray. In assessing the intersections of authoritarian regimes and how they affect or are affected by women, we must understand the environments that led to the direction of these films and their reception to comprehend fully the impact of these films as a whole. This approach will first discuss the general political environment beginning with Cuba and subsequently Brazil. There will also be a discussion on the nature of the Cuban and Brazilian women's movements. Lastly we will conclude with the filmic traditions of both Cuba and Brazil. The final goal of this analysis is to examine the socio-political and cultural interrelations and differences between these two states in order to be able to explore the different ways directors from these countries deal with issues of gender and space the basis for this study.

2.1 Cuban Political Climate

The Cuban revolution was an event that has marked Latin American history, as

well as contributed to the organization of new political alliances as seen in the Cold War. On the one hand, the ability of a small island in the shadow of the United States to assert its independence and autonomy despite the involvement of the United States in the Cuban economy is significant. Furthermore, the fact that Cuba remains economically independent from the United States after more than 50 years of the embargo merits acknowledgement. Immediately after the revolution, Cuba was to serve as a model for many other Latin American nations in conflict, many efforts were made to export similar revolutions throughout Latin America. For the most part, these attempts failed, nothing marks this more graphically than the death of Ernesto Guevara in Bolivia in 1967. Currently, Castro's brother Raúl Castro (because of Fidel's deteriorating health) is the President.

What is interesting about the Cuban Revolution and Castro's regime in Cuba is that it has endured over 50 years of adversity and economic struggles; yet the administration remains essentially the same; however this longevity has been achieved at the cost of free speech, a complete electoral democracy and political freedom. The chain of events that culminated in the arrival of Castro and his guerilla fighters in Havana, January 1, 1959 was a long and unique journey.

In general terms, it began in 1939 when Fulgencio Batista resigned his position, as the commander of the armed forces and decided to participate in the presidential elections. Batista was the son of poor sugar cane cutters and was of mixed mulatto ancestry (Lima-Dantas 30). He essentially ran the government behind several puppet presidents from 1934 to 1940. Batista defeated Ramón Grau San Martín but then later lost to him in the election of 1944 (Lima-Dantas 35). He returned to power in a Coup d'état in 1952 and overthrew president Carlos Prío with aid

from the United States (Suchlicki 132). He enjoyed popularity with Cuban citizens during the first few years as president after his coup (Keen and Haynes 437).

One of Batista's economic policies was the active presence of foreign investments in Cuba. In fact, within the Cuban economy during this time period, there were 22 foreign based corporations that controlled one fifth of Cuba's farmland. These corporations extracted resources and returned few profits to Cuba. The island had established trade agreements with the United States that guaranteed a market for Cuba's sugar exports but it also made it very difficult for Cuba to be competitive with American imports (Keen and Haynes 439). Another predicament was that many Cubans were employed during the sugar harvest for a duration of four months; outside this time frame, the workers were without any sort of income for the rest of the year. Regardless of the earnings accrued during the sugar harvest, they were not sufficient to sustain this work force year round. Another problem with the Cuban economy was that it was dependent on only one export - sugar - that was not sufficient to maintain the Cuban economy 12 months out of the year. These problems, shared with the revolutionary traditions of the Cuban people may have contributed to some of the popular unrest in Cuba. The government of President Gerardo Machado (1925-1933) had left Cuba in an economic depression marked by censorship and state imposed violence. The abuse of power of the leaders, combined with the threat of US intervention to manipulate political elections may have helped to propel the revolution. It is also interesting to note how in many ways history repeats itself. In Cuba, the theme of the abuse of power, state sponsored violence, censorship, and economic problems seem to repeat themselves. Throughout Cuban history, there has been the problematic relationship with the United States trying to intervene in the Cuban economy and political sphere. According to Benjamin Keen and Keith Haynes and I concur with Keen and Haynes's statement "In large part the complex

development of the revolution reflected a combination of loyalty to those liberal traditions and a fear of falling into their errors” (440).

Fidel Castro was the son of wealthy Spanish sugar cane planters in the region of Oriente in eastern Cuba. He pursued his studies at the Jesuit school of Belén in Havana. In 1945, Castro began law school at the University of Havana. During this time period, Eduardo Chibás created what was known as The Cuban People’s Party or the Orthodoxos. This party sought to eliminate political corruption and to create a more just politics. Castro became involved in several political movements throughout Latin America such as the Dominican Republic and Colombia. He was asked to run in the 1952 elections for the Chamber of Representatives on behalf of this party. His chances were cut short, however, because of the coup d’état led by Batista (Lima-Dantas 36). At this time, Fidel Castro organized the July 26th movement and planned an attack on the Moncada army barracks.

The attack on the army barracks occurred on July 26, 1953. This attack is significant because it marks the beginning of Castro’s confrontations against Batista. The attack failed, resulting in Castro’s incarceration on the Isle of Pines for 19 months. During this time, Castro made his eloquent speech “History will absolve me” during his trial. This speech addresses his future political agenda. At this point, he aligned his movement with the ideals of José Martí. He also noted the need for reforms well within the Cuban political tradition (Suchlicki 141). The ensuing result of Batista’s repression in response to the attack and the speech by Castro converted Castro into a national hero for many.³

³ After his incarceration in the Isla of Pines, while in Mexico City in 1955, Castro met his ally Che Guevara an Argentine medical doctor. Together they became the symbols of the revolutionary struggle and together were successful in gaining popular support and ultimately in overthrowing Batista.

In continuing his fight against the Batista regime, Castro planned another attack in 1956 from Mexico. He purchased the boat *Granma*⁴ and planned an attack with the boat landing in the eastern province of Oriente close to Santiago.⁵ After departing from Mexico with 82 people, their mission ultimately failed for several reasons. The first problem was a logistical error, they did not land where they were supposed to, and secondly they were betrayed by several individuals who were supposed to assist them upon landing. Instead, several members were killed and captured by Batista's forces and others were able to escape into the mountains of the Sierra Maestra.

In February 1957, Castro was interviewed by Herbert Matthews, a well known reporter from the *New York Times*. During this widely publicized interview, Castro "exaggerated his numerical strength and the success of the movement which in turn helped to gain more support for his cause" (Keen and Haynes 441). He also dispelled the myth that he had been killed (Lima-Dantas 37). This interview served several purposes because it emphasized his following to both the middle and upper class in Cuba as well as to foreign listeners. This was helpful in terms of garnering greater national and international support. This incident is very illuminating because it already pointed to the way Castro would systematically make use of the media to achieve his goals.

In terms of war strategy, Castro and his guerilla fighters consistently led thriving raids against Batista who had more soldiers and more resources. The predominant approach emphasized by the rebels was to ensnare small military outposts, and steal weaponry as well as

⁴ As a strategy to keep the memory of this struggle for independence, currently the Cuban national newspaper is named after the boat *Granma*, utilized in the unsuccessful attack.

⁵ José Martí was a lawyer, political leader, philosopher, intellectual and writer. He was the most important leader in the struggle for Cuban independence from Spain. Martí wrote about the dangers of North American imperialism in Cuba in his highly regarded essay "Nuestra America." Martí died in the struggle for Cuban independence; consequently he is regarded by many as the founding father of Cuban Independence.

ammunition. Another schema by the guerillas was to “isolate government outposts and reduce economic activity in the eastern half of the island” (Suchlicki 150). Ultimately they were successful in gaining relative control of the eastern provinces of the island and, when they stormed the capital, they declared victory.

Battles continued against Batista and support grew for the revolution, while attacks now continued from Havana in addition to the Sierra Maestra. Batista began to use heavy military equipment as a means to defeat the rebels in Santiago and the province of Oriente. The United States, had supported Batista with military equipment among other things began to feel alienated as Batista had broken an agreement created between the two countries that forbade him from utilizing military equipment for ‘domestic purposes’ (Keen and Haynes 441). In March 1958, the United States suspended arms shipments to Cuba which in turn negatively affected the Batista government. Simultaneously, Batista began to lose support from the middle class. Resulting in a major blow to his regime. The middle class became alienated by the excessive violence of Batista’s regime in attempting to overthrow the rebel groups. Additionally, economic stability in the island had deteriorated. When Castro ultimately overthrew Batista, it did not take long for the international community to recognize the new government.⁶

After approximately a year and a half after being in power, Castro eliminated the right to free press and ended the autonomy of the University of Havana. In 1960, president Eisenhower banned all exports to Cuba (a ban that still holds true today) as a result of Cuba’s expropriation of U.S. oil companies after they refused to process oil from the USSR, and for the implementation of communism. On April 15, 1960 John F. Kennedy approved the Bay of Pigs

⁶ By the middle of 1958, the support for the Cuban revolution had grown from 300 individuals to 3,000 when Castro and his rebels declared victory in Havana January 1, 1959 by the July 26th Movement.

invasion, an attack on Cuba led by Cuban exiles, that failed. Two years later, the Cuban missile crisis occurred when the United States became aware of Soviet nuclear missiles on Cuba pointed at the United States. Ultimately, Cuba and the Soviet Union agreed to remove the missiles (Keen and Haynes 443).

In terms of its domestic policy, the new government had as one of its main objectives to redistribute income to the working class in both urban and rural communities. In the first three years of the revolution, wages increased by 40% and overall purchasing power increased by 20% while unemployment was almost eliminated (Keen and Haynes 444). Between 1965 and 1967, Castro began a campaign of socialization that “further centralized the administration of the economy and stressed moral incentives to increase productivity. In effect, the campaign sought not only to achieve economic objectives but also to create the “new socialist man” in an ideal communist society (Keen and Haynes). The drive behind this new policy was to eliminate low productivity and motivate its citizens to work harder. Yet, these new plans were difficult to realize and warranted the need for further restructuring policies. The failure of Castro’s goal of achieving 10 million tons of sugar and only reaching 6 tons was a clear example of the need for new economic policies. Consequently, the government was restructured from 1970 to 1975. Cuba initiated a system where there were incentives for workers based on how much was produced and on the complexity of the task. This work quota system was implemented between 1971 and 1973 and resulted in a 20% growth in productivity in 1972 (Keen and Haynes 446). As a result, GNP grew more than 10% from 1971 to 1975. This new policy, however, falls outside the parameters of a traditional socialist project by creating a competitive environment for the workers with the hope of stimulating the economy, a fact that points to one of many contradictions within the Castro’s regime.

Another change in Cuba came in 1975 when the first socialist constitution was created. “This was an attempt to make the government more responsive to the people and provided for a pyramid of elected bodies” (Keen and Haynes 446). Cuba’s economic system then saw a downturn from 1976 to 1980 where economic growth was now only 4% a year, stemming from problems in productivity and poor manufacturing capacities. A consequence of the increasing social and economic discontent was immigration from Cuba that had occurred in waves corresponding with economic downturn, aside from the first wave of immigration that began the first few weeks as soon as the overthrow was declared a revolution. Many citizens and officials who had any kind of ties to the Batista regime left the island with the fear that they might be imprisoned or executed.⁷ Another exodus of Cuban citizens that corresponds to the aforementioned economic crisis was that of the Mariel boat dock where 125,000 Cubans immigrated to the United States from April to May in 1980. There were “approximately 260,000 refugees who were officially airlifted from Cuba during the United States-Cuban Freedom Flights program of 1965-71” (Lima-Dantas 59).⁸ Historically, we can see a clear correlation in Cuba between large populations going into exile and social or economic discontent.⁹

From 1981 to 1985 there was a shift in Cuba’s economy and growth increased to 7.6%. Economists Claus Brundenius and Andrew Zimbalist have concluded that despite the ups and

⁷ The actual number of Batista officials who were executed is questionable. Some sources state that over 200 people were executed, while others claim the number to be significantly higher.

⁸ Another period when many Cubans immigrated abroad was in the early 1990’s with the fall of the Soviet Union and the Cuban economic crisis stemming from this, --was known as the “special period” named by Castro.

⁹ The issue of exodus and Cuban exiles is a reality for most Cubans either on the island or elsewhere. There were large amounts of Cubans who left the country, as a result, it is very common for a Cuban family to have at least one family member abroad or to know of someone who has a family member living in another country. What separates the immigrant populations from Cuba specifically in the United States from other Latin American immigrants is the socio-economic status of these groups. Most of the immigrants that left Cuba were highly educated, and constituted a land owning elite who were potentially about to lose all of their property to Castro’s regime. Furthermore, the United States was very supportive of the Cuban immigrant population by offering them asylum and economic incentives to re-settle in the United States. This assistance was with the hope that these communities would aid in the termination of what they believed to be the threat of communism in the Western Hemisphere. The Bay of Pigs invasion clearly illustrates this point, although all of the attempts to overthrow Castro were ultimately unsuccessful.

downs of Cuba's economy "Cuba's economic growth between 1960 and 1985 was the second highest in all of Latin America" (qtd. in Keen and Haynes 447). This is significant because it points towards a moderately successful approach of an economic agenda at a time when the rest of Latin America was amid economic crisis and civil war.

Despite a lack of resources, Economic Sanctions imposed against the island by the United States, and the economic difficulties that Cubans faced, when compared to the rest of Latin America during this time period, the island fared quite well as indicated by Cuba's low percentages of unemployment. The economic reality in Cuba changed significantly in the early 1990's with the collapse of the Soviet Union. This represents a heavy blow to the Cuban economy which had depended heavily on the support of the Soviets. Cuba's levels of illiteracy are virtually non-existent as a major agenda of the Castro regime was to educate the Cuban citizens. Another achievement of the revolution was to guarantee healthcare to all of its citizens, a feat that even the most economically advanced western country could not boast. Currently, eighty percent of Cubans own their own homes. This can explain the popular support the government has received from some segments of the population. At the same time, as has occurred since the beginning of the revolution, Castro has made use of his speeches, television, and the cinema, to propagate his ideas. In a place where the absence of freedom of speech and press is still a reality, it is easy to understand the lack of dissident voices. Therefore, we cannot deny the violence that is still present in the island. Those who do not concur with the regime are jailed.¹⁰ In addition, economic sanctions have resulted in petroleum rationing and the difficulty in repairing machinery, to cite just a few issues.

¹⁰ In the first few years under Castro, some highly ranked officials with the Batista regime were killed.

2.2 Cuban Women's Movements

Although history is traditionally written from a male perspective, there were various women involved with the Cuban revolution since its inception. Since the mid 1950's, women began to take on decisive roles in the battle against Batista. One important figure was Haydeé Santamaría who was a founding member of the 1952 resistance movement against Batista. Another important figure was Melba Hernández who was the attorney who defended Castro in his trial prior to being incarcerated in the Isle of Pines. These two women worked with other anti- Batista/ women's groups such as the *Association of United Cuban Women*, led by Gloria Cuadras, and the *Women's Martí Civic Front* organized by Carmen Castro. These groups' activities began against the Machado regime in the 1920's (Keen and Haynes 440). Another important figure in the Cuban revolution was Celia Sánchez who was known as Cuba's most prominent guerilla fighter. The revolution even had a female combat unit called the "Mariana Grajales Brigade" in honor of the Cuban independence fighter Antonio Maceo and his mother. More women's organizations began to appear in the beginning of 1959 in support of the revolution's activities.

These organizations also became vocal on the need to improve women's rights. Many of these groups were fragmented throughout the island with little contact and /or communication amongst themselves. The *Federation of Cuban Women* (FCW) was created on August 23, 1960 as a means to unify all of these organizations under the cause of advocating for women's rights while strengthening the revolutionary efforts. They did this by incorporating women into their efforts and educating them on the ideals of the revolution (Randall 125). The main issue that the FCW sought to change was the large number of peasant women whom were uneducated and very isolated within their households. The organization focused on educating these women and

integrating them into the workforce. Following the goals established by the revolution, they were also involved in the education and integration into society of the prostitutes. Women were educated in the areas of reading and writing, math, dress making and other skills enabling them to embark on different forms of viable employment. As Margaret Randall states, “The FMC won its place as the organization women turned to for orientation in times of crisis and the place where they could offer their ideas and services to the revolution” (126).¹¹ It is important to note here that the education and social services offered by the FCW did not come without education on the ideals of the revolution, and all of the women whom went through the program were required to take courses in “ ‘Revolutionary Instruction’ where they learned the goals and ideals of the Revolution” (Randall 129). This signifies that the FCW and the revolutionary leaders viewed women as guardians and transmitters of the principles of the revolution (Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1). The importance in educating them was perceived as a goal to guarantee popular support for the regime. The fact that most of these women belonged to different socio-economic classes and geographic regions only contributed to the dissemination of ideas throughout Cuba.

An important figure in the FCW and for women in the revolution was Vilma Espín. She notes, that when there is inquiry regarding how it was that women came together at the FCW, she emphasizes that women were drawn to the courses on dressmaking and first aid – activities usually perceived being primarily female realms and involving mostly women belonging to the lower or lower middle classes. She mentions that simultaneously there were enemy planes attacking, therefore it became imperative to teach “[t]he masses that the real name of the enemy was imperialism and it went hand in hand with the improvement of daily life” (Randall 131). Furthermore, it is significant to note that the revolution had not declared itself socialist in the

¹¹ FMC stands for Federacion de Mujeres Cubanas. In this dissertation, I chose to use the English translation.

first year. It was not until 1962 that a main agenda of the FCW was to incorporate women into the workforce; as that became economically and socially imperative for the success of the revolution and the Cuban society as a whole, “It became clear that women’s participation in the social production was essential to development” (Randall 132).

According to Randall, the six main goals of the FCW were to: 1. Increase the self esteem and improve the image of women in society; 2. To make women conscious of the value and necessity of their participation in all facets of society; 3. To raise women’s ideological, political and cultural level in order that women be in the best possible position to play the role that women must in the construction of a socialist society; 4. To channel from the grassroots level and upwards; women’s opinions, ideas and problems in order that they may be presented to the party and state agencies for solutions; 5. To offer the revolution the energies and ideas of the fifty percent of the population that is female. Lastly, one of their goals was to share their experiences with ‘sister’ nations and to demonstrate that “only through socialist revolution may a just society be attained, a classless society in which Cuban women are truly free” (134).

Although many of these goals are important to women, there is a basic predicament that needs to be addressed, which is that Cuban women in reality are not free to make their own choices, but they are limited to those that are in accordance to the revolution’s goals. They are living under an authoritarian regime; they cannot participate in any kind of election where they can change the head of state and they can be incarcerated for speaking against the government. The constant arrest of dissidents makes it clear that there is no freedom of speech. Therefore, although Randall offers several valid points pertaining to the importance of women in Cuban society, she fails to acknowledge many of the problems that came with the Cuban revolution. For instance, despite the fact that there were many gains in women’s education and socio-economic

status, women are not equals and sexual discrimination remains. I should note that Randall does recognize that further changes need to be made; regarding gender roles. In fact, her inability to present both sides of the debate weakens her argument. This is interesting coming from an author who is an American citizen and whose book was published by an American publishing house at a time when there is an economic blockade against Cuba. Although her contributions to scholarship on women in Cuba are significant, Randall, like many other Latin American authors and intellectuals of the time, viewed the Cuban Revolution with idealized eyes. Like Randall, they were all foreigners who visited the island with a certain level of privilege that distanced them from the complete reality of the island. Not until many years afterwards would Cuba lose much of this intellectual support.¹²

Nonetheless, the concern with education is an element that was central to the revolution from the very beginning of the movement. During the beginning of the Cuban Revolution, the guerilla fighters were mostly men and the main role for women was to assist in the well-being of the troops. Many of the educated women from the region also assisted with the education of the fighters and the general peasant population. Women worked with illiterate soldiers and taught them how to read and write. Other women also worked as nurses to soldiers in makeshift hospitals in the mountains. As the revolution received more support, women began to take a more predominant role in the revolutionary efforts as they made contacts in urban areas and transferred guns and ammunition which came at times from outside the country to and from urban areas to the mountains of the Sierra Maestra. Women also fought in the *Mariana Grajales Platoon* and participated in combat in 1959 (Randall 52). Therefore, unlike what is usually

¹² With the exception of Gabriel García Márquez who remains very close to the Castro family.

portrayed in the narrative of the nation, women were present in various spheres of the revolution, demanding a major role in the process of re-thinking the nation.

One noteworthy aspect shared by both countries was the significant activity of women in social movements in the sixties and seventies that surpassed any other activity seen anywhere else in Latin America. In sum, the revolution brought many advances for poor and rural segments of the population; although it cannot be denied its authoritarian behavior when dealing with dissidents. As the paragraph above reveals, women had an important role in the dissemination of the revolutionary goals as well as in the discussion to ascertain more rights for women. Many of these same dynamics can be found in Brazil. Marked by an authoritarian and violent dictatorship, women and the family played a crucial role legitimizing the government as well as challenging many of their assumptions will become apparent in the following section.

2.3 Brazilian Political Climate

Elected in 1956, Juscelino Kubitschek brought significant changes in various spheres of the nation. His economic policy was designed to give many incentives to foreign investment. Kubitschek made a commitment to progress with the slogan “50 years progress in 5 years” (Keen and Haynes 371). This resulted in a transition from being a predominantly agrarian led economy to an agrarian and industrial led economy. The capital of Brazil was moved to Brasília; infrastructure and technology such as the construction of dams increased. Kubitschek additionally terminated Brazil’s relationship with the IMF which resulted in many problems. This action increased Brazil’s dependence on other foreign investors that enlarged Brazil’s already enormous foreign debt. Kubitschek increased the countries money supply which led to inflation and the devaluation of their national currency (Keen and Haynes 5). According to

Thomas E. Skidmore, Kubitscheck's presidency was, on the one hand, positive for Brazil, because "[h]is enthusiastic political style and personality reinforced the traditional Brazilian sense of optimism. Kubitscheck stressed solutions rather than problems. He radiated confidence in the country and its capacity to join the industrial world" (146). Unfortunately, because of the rapid industrialization and progress of Brazil, the countries deficit and inflation grew exponentially.

Elected in 1960, Jânio da Silva Quadros had a more conservative approach in terms of foreign investment. In fact, although he encouraged the entry of foreign capital, he was against their participation in Brazilian oil production. Another important element of his presidency was that Quadros "showed his independence in foreign policy by defying U.S. hemispheric leadership and defending revolutionary Cuba's right to self-determination" (Keen and Haynes 372). This is significant because there were few countries which took this stance -- it highlights one of several approximations between the two countries. Quadros, while in power, sought to create alliances with socialist countries in the developing world and reduce Brazil's dependence on capitalist states. Some examples of this would be his reinstatement of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, the establishment of trade relations with China, and his condemnation of the U.S. Bay of Pigs invasion against Cuba. Another example would also be the award he gave Che Guevara in August 1961, the *Cruzeiro do Sul* - Brazil's most prestigious decoration given to a foreigner (Skidmore 150).

Because of a deadlock in Congress, Quadros was ultimately forced to resign, and João Goulart who was the vice-president, became president in 1961 after Brazil went for a year

without a president (Skidmore 151).¹³ The following year, Goulart reversed Quadros's actions and announced his opposition to Castro's government. It seemed that while he was courting support from the U.S. (and received 131 million in aid to go to Brazil's northeast), he was continuing several of Quadros's economic policies as he further expanded Brazil's trade networks with soviet nations. Furthermore, "Goulart refused to impose sanctions against Cuba and join the U.S." in their embargo against Cuba, which ultimately shows considerable resistance to the United States and dominant western powers, and once again emphasizes the level of support shared between the two countries at the time (Keen and Haynes 372). The possibility of having new markets for Brazilian goods was a decisive factor in maintaining a level of cooperation between Cuba and Brazil. Of course, by refusing to accept the US economic sanctions, Cuba would perceive Brazil as an interesting partner in its fight and campaign against US imperialism. Therefore, this alliance served the goals of both countries (Skidmore 8).

During 1964, economic problems increased, and inflation was over 100% (Skidmore 155). Many of those in power felt that Goulart had moved too far to the left, and eventually he was ousted from power. The U.S. also supported this change. The military government came to power in 1964, and tried to maintain a "façade of democracy" that remained in place for a while (Keen and Haynes 373). This same year the military regime created a decree to legitimize itself on some levels. The military regime created an "Institutional Act" which essentially gave the military the ability to do anything it desired (Skidmore 157). At this point, the United States owned approximately half of Brazil's total foreign investment, and in defense of their economic interests, and since Goulart was planning on expropriating and nationalizing all of Brazil's

¹³ When Goulart was appointed president, executive powers remained under the prime minister and the cabinet at the time, a factor that severely hindered his control of the state. Not until 1963, in a national plebiscite, did Brazil vote for Goulart to gain complete presidential powers, and the former constitutional amendment that had curtailed his powers was eliminated (Skidmore 152).

private (foreign) refineries, they quickly recognized the military government. In fact, U.S. president Lynden Johnston officially recognized the military government within a few hours (Skidmore 157). These actions occurred within the context of the Alliance for Progress; a ten year program created in 1961 by John F. Kennedy to foster growth, development and democracy in Latin America. One of its main concerns was to encourage economic cooperation between the US and Latin America. According to Thomas Skidmore, although the Johnston administration was well aware that the military regime was illegal and unconstitutional, it was hoped that this early recognition would steer them away from authoritarianism that could jeopardize US interests - an unfortunate idea that was ultimately proved erroneous (162). Furthermore, another crucial element to the state of affairs was the threat of Cuban revolutions being exported to Latin America: "In fact, promoting democracy had never been the sole aim of the United States. Another principal preoccupation for Washington was geo-political: "Stop Castroism." -Soviet influence must not be allowed to expand in the hemisphere was the logic" (Skidmore 162).

Subsequent to the military overthrow in 1964, the military maintained power for twenty-one years (Skidmore 159). The military dictatorship became marked by violence and aggressive behavior in 1968 stemming from an internal conflict between the moderates and the hardliners within the military and mounting student, intellectuals, and popular protests, led the military hard liners to impose harsher measures (Skidmore 164). As a means to maintain a close grip on the situation, the military regime created Acts #4 and #5 which shut down congress, and eliminated civil and political rights, giving total power to the military regime. In 1968, paramilitary death squads began to surface as a reaction to increased social unrest by the left (Skidmore 173). Torture and violence become paramount to the military dictatorship resulting in the most violent

period of the military dictatorship. Several thousand people disappeared and were killed and/or tortured. Men and women were victims of this regime (Keen and Haynes 377; Dassin 77-80).¹⁴

There were attempts to overthrow the military regime, one in particular was implemented using Castro's tactics of rural guerrilla warfare, but in an urban setting. The leader, Carlos Marighella, was a former member of the communist party. The group resorted to kidnappings as a means to attract attention and support. The state's response though was to augment torture and violence easily overpowering the guerilla groups whose support network ultimately began to disappear (Skidmore 6). In 1978, thirty-three unions created a manifesto, that declared they should have the right to strike, organize and have political amnesty. The economic miracle and consequential inflation of the 1970's provoked a loss of support from various sections of the population, particularly the middle class. Between 1978 and 1983, a period known as *abertura política*, the militaries had to make concessions to the increasing internal and international criticism. There were popular congressional elections in 1982, and Brazil elected its next president in 1989, Fernando Collor de Mello.¹⁵ During this last decade, Brazil entered an economic crisis, and maintained a foreign debt of 50 million dollars. The level of poverty also increased during and after the military regime as those living at or below the poverty line were 50.9 million in 1979, and then 61.03 million in 1987, and 69.8 million in 1990 (Keen and Haynes 391).

Similar to what happened in Cuba, Brazilian women were also involved in movements that supported political causes. We observe an increasing involvement that, having its roots in

¹⁴ An excellent documentary which documents the atrocities that many Brazilian women endured and then the lack of acceptance of the general population of the events which had occurred is *Que Bom te Ver Viva*, released in 1989 by Lucia Murat.

¹⁵ In 1985, Tancredo Neves was elected president in an indirect election. The vice-president José Sarney took office because Tancredo Neves passed away suddenly.

previous decades, began to challenge political and economic policies until the issue of gender became an essential component of their questioning.

2.4 Brazilian women's movements

During the 1960's, the economic crisis and high levels of unemployment obliged women belonging to poor communities to find other economic sources to help their family. One alternative was participating in workshops organized by the Catholic Church where they could learn embroidery and other similar skills. Little by little, these women began organizing themselves in groups that would demand clean water, improved housing conditions and affordable food pricing. Over time, the organizations became more political, advocating for women's rights and democracy (Keen and Haynes 380; Barroso and Bruschini 155). This movement was not restricted to the poor segments of the population. Women belonging to middle and upper classes also began to organize and circulate newspapers such as *Brasil Mulher*, which had a circulation of ten thousand readers and affirmed that "capitalism is the origin of numerous forms of the oppression of women" (Keen and Haynes 380).¹⁶

An example of the effects of these women's organizations on state policy can be seen in 1962, when attorney Romy Medeiros da Fonseca and her colleagues were able to make a change to the Brazilian civil code which actually allowed women to have control over their families as designated by the state. Until this point, husbands had been granted to have total control over

¹⁶ The first signs of women's participation in politics and activism can be seen during the fight for the abolition of slavery, in the 1880's. A major issue of concern for any of the women's movements in the early 20th century was the need for an improvement in educational opportunities for women as well as an improvement in economic independence. In the elections of 1960, women held an important role, as they organized a protest on a very large scale which celebrated the tenth anniversary of the Brazilian Women's Federation. Kubitschek had outlawed this organization in 1956 (Keen and Haynes 372).

decisions regarding the family. Nevertheless, the husband legally remained the “head of the marital union.” Subsequently, in 1968, a prohibition was made against a discriminatory hiring procedure. During this time period in terms of political activity, women’s movements did not gain full momentum again until the 1970’s when they gained more visibility. In the 1970’s, feminist movements were composed in their majority by white middle and upper class women who were more concerned in promoting structural changes within society since, according to June Hahner, “[t]he feminist movement in the 1970’s and 80’s surpassed that found elsewhere in Latin America” (182). One difference was their concern in incorporating more of the population such as women from lower socio-economic classes. Although there was this attempt to incorporate women with different experiences, the goals were still based on the leaders’ perspective - which can explain some of the failures of the movement.

By the 1980’s, many intellectuals, who had gone into exile returned to Brazil during the political opening process. On an intellectual level, many academic journals and publications began to be disseminated. Some significant women’s groups that were created during the mid 70’s to 80’s were organizations such as *Centro da Mulher Brasileira* in Rio de Janeiro, *Centro de Desenvolvimento da Mulher* in São Paulo, and the organization *Nós Mulheres* as well as *Pro-Mulher*. Major hubs of feminist activity could obviously be found in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, but in addition to this, activity could be found in other major cities such as Belo Horizonte, Porto Alegre, Curitiba and Londrina (Hahner 196). Some of the achievements for women during this period were the legalization of divorce in 1977. In the 1980’s, issues of sexuality were discussed with less restriction than in the past and two books on women and sexuality became bestsellers. During the 1980’s, the issue of domestic violence became pertinent

to women's movements. Several shelters for battered women were created around Brazil. A few were *SOS Corpo* in Recife, and *SOS Mulher* in São Paulo (Hahner 205).

The divisions between and within the feminist movements would become more visible in the 80's when other groups with different experiences and political agendas began to organize themselves. An interesting comment made by Sueli Carneiro discussing the struggles on black Brazilian women, is that when discussing women's identity in Brazil, it is important to underline the profound differences between women. She affirms that the unique historical experiences and the legacy of slavery of black women must be taken into consideration. "The classic feminist discourse on women's oppression fails to account for the qualitative difference in oppression suffered by black women" (218). She goes on to argue that the achievements of white women's feminism are only beneficial for their wants. Moreover, in the same vein, gains achieved by black men have mainly only benefitted black man rather than black men and women. Echoing Caren Kaplan and Chandra Mohanty, I would say that the tensions between and within these various feminist movements point to the different dimensions of power structuring women's life and society (162). In this case, it is not the categories of "third" and "first" world women that are put into question but the very perception of women in the space of the nation. Although this plurality and complexity is also part of the Cuban society, at least for a while these issues seemed to be viewed as secondary to the goals of the revolution as we will discuss when analyzing the films.

2.5 Cuban Film Industry

Upon analyzing the representation of women in Cuban film, it is important to understand the context for the production of the films and to understand the development of the Cuban Film

industry. Cuban cinema has a long tradition. In fact, the first film to ever be viewed in Cuba was screened on January 4, 1897 according to Alfonso J. García Osuna. This event was a year after motion pictures were first viewed in France, which shows how Cuba remained relatively current with the beginnings of the film industry worldwide. Gabriel Veyre, the Frenchman who worked for The Lumière Bros. Cinématographe, was the individual that organized the projection of this film and later on became the first person to create a Cuban film entitled *Simulacro de Incendio*. He made two other films as well *Un Duelo a Pistola* and *Carga de los Rurales en México*. Both of these films were shown in Mexico under different names and were actually produced in Mexico between August 1896 and January 1897. Both of these films according to Osuna, were the first films ever made in Latin America (9).¹⁷

The first Cuban to produce a film was José E. Casasús who began his career as an actor and then after purchasing his own projector began to show films around the island. This then led him to create the first truly Cuban film called *El Brujo Desapareciendo* (Osuna 10). The response to these early film screenings was the development of spaces within Havana that solely focused on the projection of film. Some examples are: *Panorama Soler*, *Salón de Variedades*, and *Paseo del 118*. The first theatre built exclusively for film projection in Havana was called the *Floradora* whose name was later switched to “Alaska.” One of the longest running Cuban movie houses is known as *Actualidades*, opened in 1905. The next year, a production company created by Francisco Rodríguez and Enrique Díaz Quesada became known as the *Moving Pictures Company*. Together they created Cuba’s oldest documentary *El Parque de Palatino* in 1906 (Osuna 11). Another film distribution company came about known as *Compañía Cinematográfica Habanera*, that was created by the Spaniards Pablo Santos and Jesús Artigas

¹⁷ Even at this early date we can see the importance that Cuba and Mexico have played in the development of Latin American Cinema and their influence has continued over a century later.

managed film distribution and replacement materials in Cuba. In 1908, Díaz Quezada, became one of the most important early Cuban directors, he filmed *Un Cabildo en na Romualda* - a groundbreaking movie because it was the first of its kind to create a movie that dealt with an Afro-Cuban identity at a time in history when race and identity were major contested issues. The first Cuban publications discussing film emerged in 1912. One was known as *La Gaceta Teatral y Cinematográfica* and the other was called *Cuba Cinematográfica*. These publications are clear proof that the film industry in Cuba was creating a market for an audience as well as for critics, and account for an interest in Cuban film at many levels within society (Osuna 14).

Another important film worth mentioning, (that to the best of my knowledge it is one of the first to include women and their struggles) is known by two titles, *La Manigua* or *La Mujer Cubana*. Released in 1915, the film presents the role of women during the wars of Cuban independence and was well received both at the box office in terms of the amount of tickets sold and for the high price over 3,225 people attending paid -- 80 cents per person (Osuna 15).¹⁸

During 1916 was the first time that films from the United States began to have a presence in Cuba and the actual quantity of European films were surpassed by American ones. It is interesting to observe that during this time period another Cuban film organization was launched, the *Association for the Defense of Cuban Cinematography*, and this organization united all facets of Cuban film production from the producers, to the distributors as well as the directors (Osuna

¹⁸ The early prominent director of the beginnings of Cuban film Enrique Quezadas passed away at the age of 41. Ramón Peón began to emerge as a prominent director of Cuban film, but film production dramatically decreased after Quezadas death and many Cubans began to view more foreign films as a consequence. Unfortunately, shortly after the death of Quezadas, his entire film collection with all of his negatives was destroyed, and most of these films were lost forever (Osuna 19). *La Manigua* warrants further study for the aforementioned reasons, but falls outside of the scope for this particular study.

11).¹⁹ In spite of the various attempts to protect Cuban production, only in 1947 Tomás Gutiérrez Alea was able to produce the first two Cuban films using 8mm -- the films *La Capercucita Roja* and *Un Fakir*. Another significant moment in Cuban film history is when the University of Havana created a film department under the direction of José Manuel Valdés Rodríguez in 1949 (Osuna 32). This is significant because it marks a moment when Cuba as a nation asserts itself as an innovator and creator of film production and by creating a separate department, it asserts its prominence among other more traditional disciplines and furthermore, it fosters continued development in Cuba's already well-known cinematic traditions. The 1950's were not only a critical year for Cuba due to the creation of Cuba's first television network, but it was also a groundbreaking year because it marked substantial film production with a record of 14 feature length films produced (Osuna 33).

Things changed dramatically in Cuba after the revolution, and this was no different for the film industry. The rebel army prior to the success of the revolution had already established a film unit to produce documentaries on integral reforms of the revolution such as agrarian reform (Chanan 17). Throughout the Cuban revolution, film production was always made a priority and received full support of the Cuban government. Within the context of the monumental success of the revolution, it is important to recognize that in 1959, "film was at an important peak in popularity. Box-office earnings in 1959 reached 22,800,000 pesos roughly 120 million admissions, for a population of around seven million, this gives a national cinema-going average of seventeen visits annually-and this is why it mattered" (Chanan 18). These numbers can help us understand the crucial role played by the cinema for the government and revolutionaries as they

¹⁹ The first film to use a soundtrack was a short film titled *Maracas y Bongo* around 1932 directed by Max Tosquella. Another organization for Cuban cinema was created in 1938 by the name of *Cuba Sono Films*, and this organization would remain active in Cuba for several decades. This group consisted of the Cuban communists Luis Alvarez Tabío and his cousin José Tabío. They produced several political documentaries as well as some fictional films such as *Un Héroe del Pueblo Español* (Osuna 30).

could help disseminate their ideas and “facts” depending on who was controlling the cinematic production. During a period of significant socio-economic transition, it was clear that cinema needed to document and facilitate this process. As a result, there were many gains in the Cuban film industry after the revolution. The Cuban Institute of Film Art and Industry (INCAIC) was created by the revolutionary government three months after coming into power and is still a working organization today almost fifty years later.

According to Michael Chanan, after the revolution and the establishment of INCAIC, “Cuban films enjoyed a reputation around the world as the model of cinema that conjoined political commitment and bold aesthetic novelty” (ix). The president of INCAIC was Alfredo Guevara who was a friend of Fidel’s from when he was a student. In the 1970’s, INCAIC fought to become a more autonomous institution and found some improvements in this area. The post revolutionary era for Cuban film was a highly creative one where “they turned the cameras on the process they were living and told the Cuban people –and anyone else who was interested– who they were and what they were doing” (Chanan 4).

Some important influences in the revolutionary film industry were Italian Neo-realism, the French New Wave and *Cinema Novo*. Cuba in 1979 created a critical role for itself in the film industry by establishing the long running International Festival of New Latin American Cinema which has been held annually to the present time. It is interesting to note that Cuba has had only one female film director of a full length feature film -- Sara Gómez --this is symptomatic of the shortcomings of the Cuban film agenda, because while films are criticizing women’s inequality, on another level they perpetuate it by not providing more opportunities for women to direct full length feature films. At the same time, the necessity to disseminate the revolutionary goals has meant some forms of restriction for many directors as we will see when

we focus specifically on the Cuban films.

2.6 Brazilian Film Industry

Film arrived to Brazil earlier than it did in Cuba. Six months after the Lumière film projection in Paris, *Omnigraph* was first projected in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in July 8, 1886. Thereafter, film equipment arrived via an Italian- Brazilian named Affonso Segreto who began filmmaking in Brazil by recording Brazilian daily life such as festivals and public ceremonies (Stam and Johnson 19). Because of limited accessibility of electricity at the time, venues for film projection and recording were limited. This hindered further expansion of the Brazilian film industry until several years later. Between the years 1910-1912, film drastically increased in popularity and over a hundred films were created most of which documentaries or newsreels containing current events. The first fictional Brazilian film, *Os Estranguladores*, directed by Antonio Leal was released in 1908. The film was based on the story of a true crime. 1908 was the year that marks the beginning of what was known as the *Bela Época* or the Golden Age of the Brazilian cinema (Stam and Johnson 9). It is a period marked by increased film production, financial support and distribution, as well as a large audience that attended the film screenings. The first Brazilian comedy, *Nho Anastasias Chegou de Viagem*, was released this year as well as a film based on soccer. The development of film during this time period encompassed several different genres such as opera adaptations and literary interpretations (Stam and Johnson 21).

As seen in Cuba, the expansion of film in its early stages was not accessible to the entire population and was limited to a ruling elite who could afford the luxury of paying the admission

prices at the ticketing office. This later changed in Brazil as well as in Cuba.²⁰ In fact, after the Golden Age, film became more accessible to the masses due to the onset of increased urbanization (Stam and Johnson 22). The Golden Age period waned in Brazil in the twenties with the introduction of U.S. and European films entering the Brazilian film market. Since its inception, the film industry could not compete against the foreign film distributors which had established a superior system of infrastructural development. The result was that it was more costly and a higher risk to attain Brazilian films over foreign films resulting in the overall decline in Brazilian film production (Johnson 22). In an attempt to cultivate the future of film production in Brazil, the first film school was created with the work of Gilberto Rossi - an Italian director in São Paulo among other directors and technicians. The school was named *Escola de Artes Cinematográficas Azzurri*, these schools were established throughout Brazil.

A prominent filmmaker to emerge in the 20's and 30's was Humberto Mauro, whom Glauber Rocha describes as an important precursor to Cinema Novo. His first film was *Valiã, o Cratera* released in 1925, but the film noted to have the most impact on future generations was *Favela dos Meus Amores*, released in 1934, which was one of the first films to capture the inequality found in Brazil by filming the struggles of daily life there (Johnson 26). The thirties in Brazil brought sound to film with *Coisas Nossas*, in 1931, despite that it was directed by the American Wallace Downey. This decade saw the creation of the *Chanchadas* which was a Brazilian film “partially modeled on American musicals of the same period and with roots in the Brazilian comic theater.” Carmen Miranda was a frequent actress of the *chanchadas* of the thirties, including *Alô Alô Brasil* (1935) and *Alô Alô Carnaval* (1936) both directed by Adhemar Gonzaga with Miranda prior to her departure for Hollywood (Johnson 27). The popularity of the

²⁰ The Cuban revolutionary government sent mobile film units into the countryside to expose film to all members of the population.

chanchadas lessened with the introduction of television in the fifties but remained popular through the thirties.

A new film company was created in the 1940's led by Alberto Cavalcanti known as the *Vera Cruz Film Company*. This film company sought to separate itself from what a *paulista* elite viewed as unsophisticated filmmaking as seen through the chanchadas. Their response to this was to emulate Hollywood cinema and values, in turn according to Robert Stam and Randal Johnson "Completely ignored the tastes, interests, and real situations of Brazilian people." Later on, the film company was forced to close because they could not attract the public. The extreme reaction to this approach was Cinema Novo which subsequently produced 18 films (Johnson 29).

Stam and Johnson argue that there were three phases of Cinema Novo, the first from 1960 to 1964, then from 1964 to 1968 and then last from 1968 to 1972. A few of the most prominent film directors of this genre were Nelson Pereira dos Santos, Leon Hirszman, Glauber Rocha and Carlos Diegues. The purpose of Cinema Novo was to detach itself from mainstream and Hollywood driven cinema, and to create a new genre of film that was conscious raising. The directors of Cinema Novo sought to portray the harsh reality of social injustices within the Brazilian nation and bring them to the forefront. Dominant society did not want to discuss the difficulties of daily life for *favela* dwellers, nor the injustices of landless peasants of the *sertão*. Cinema Novo did not want these realities to be obscured by a Hollywood mirage of Brazilian carnivals and soccer games. Stylistically, two major influences were Italian Neo-realism by using actors who were not trained professionally as well as the French New Wave in the sense that most of the Cinema Novo films were produced on a very low budget without the assistance or

funding of major corporations.²¹ Some important films that are well known from this period are: *Vidas Secas* (1963) by Nelson Pereira dos Santos and *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* (1964) by Glauber Rocha. The films of the first phase of Cinema Novo, according to Johnson and Stam, “share a certain political optimism, characteristic of the developmentalist years (associated with Kubistcheck) but the proposal failed due, among other things, to the youth of the directors kind of faith that merely showing these problems would be a first step toward their solution” (34). The second phase of Cinema Novo presented a change in the sentiments of optimism that were found in the first phase. This also paralleled a level of increased authoritarian rule by the dictatorial regime of the time. Some films from this era are *Fome de Amor* (1968) by Nelson Pereira dos Santos and *O Desafio* (1966) by Paulo César Saraceni.

A serious shortcoming of Cinema Novo in the first two phases (and I believe of the genre as a whole,) was that while the films brought the intricate and harsh realities of Brazilian daily life, the directors were simultaneously alienating their public. The result was films which ultimately reached smaller publics and, when they did have an audience, most of the films were too highly intellectualized with a very limited mass appeal. Consequently, Cinema Novo in a sense ultimately failed to raise the consciousness of Brazilians to create any social change because most of the audience members could not relate to or completely understand many of the films. The solution of many directors was to change this characteristic of Cinema Novo and make it more accessible and commercial. At the end of second phase of Cinema Novo, most of the prominent directors were forced into exile in Europe stemming from the dramatic increase in censorship and authoritarian repression. This was the case for Carlos Dieges and Glauber Rocha as well as hundreds of other Brazilian artists and intellectuals of the time. Many of these

²¹ Much like what is seen in Mexican Cinema.

directors did return to Brazil in 1972 after the political instability subsided somewhat and continued to produce more films.

In the 60s, there was also the emergence of another cultural movement known as Tropicalism which “was a movement that touched music and theater as well as the cinema, emphasized the grotesque, bad taste, kitsch and gaudy colors. It played aggressively with certain myths, especially with the notion of Brazil as a tropical paradise characterized by the colorful exuberance and tutti frutti hats á la Carmen Miranda” (Stam and Johnson 38). Many of these aspects are present in *Macunaíma*, but there are also many elements of comedic value making the films not only entertaining, but also critical of Brazil in an implicit manner.

In the 1970’s, some directors of Cinema Novo aligned themselves with *Embrafilme* which for some seemed to be a positive step for the film industry, but by 1990 film production had declined again. The number of theatres decreased from 3,276 in 1975 to less than 1,100 in 1988 (Johnson 354). Johnson argues that by the 1990’s the Brazilian film industry “was back to square one” as the crisis in film industry in the 90’s was reflecting the deeper economic crisis of the state. In 1990, President Fernando Collor de Mello ended the state sponsored Embrafilme production company. In an economic crisis with escalating inflation rates, film became a luxury for a large percent of the population (Johnson 365).

During the dictatorship, the film genre that emerged was the *pornochanchada* which was produced in large quantities and encouraged by the authoritarian government in the seventies. According to Randal Johnson, this was the most commercially successful period of Brazilian cinematic history. The films associated with the *pornochanchadas* were films lacking depth which presented storylines based on adultery, sexual fantasies, and incest. The films were created

with a male audience in mind. The authoritarian government had been accused of attempting to sway public opinion from the institutionalized violence and torture of the regime with the new genre of films. Another facet of the pornochanchadas has been associated with the sexual ‘liberation’ of the time period stemming from the feminist and birth control movements of the time. Kátia da Costa Bezerra attributes these two opposing aspects as a paradox based in historical principles traced to the Colonial period where women were encouraged to maintain their virginity prior to their marriage and remain chaste throughout their lives, while men, on the other hand, were encouraged from a very young age by their fathers to engage in sexual acts with slaves or prostitutes as a means to establish their masculinity. Bezerra concludes that “[i]n a sense, these films resume this standard of behavior, reinforcing the sexual roles insofar as the attractive and sensuous women portrayed in these films were usually punished in the end” (22-23).

Despite the strong presence of pornochanchadas, the seventies were also a period of diversity in terms of film production as many female and ethnically diverse directors began to emerge (Johnson 43). This diversity of thematic is a clear proof of the emergence of new cultural actors who began to question the Brazilian society from nuanced directions, bringing to the fore experiences “forgotten” or idealized up until this point. Subsequently, in the vein of the feminist movements, the cultural sphere becomes more diversified allowing for the entry of women and blacks into the direction of films. Some prominent female directors were Maria do Rosário Marcados with *Para Viver* (1976) *Nordeste Cordel, Repente, Canção* (1975) by Tania Quaresma, *Os Homens que eu Tive* by Teresa Trautman and Ana Carolina Teixeira Soares’s first film *Mar de Rosas* released in 1977 (Johnson 43). Some examples of black directors in Brazilian film could be seen with Antonio Pitanga with *Na Boca de Mundo* (1977) and Waldyr Onofre

with the film *As Aventuras Amorosas de um Padeiro* (1975). Currently there has been a significant increase in women directing Brazilian films released on a yearly basis. I think the future will continue to see women's presence in the film industry and hopefully influence other Latin American countries to do the same.

As we can see, there is a strong correlation between the development of the film industry and the socio-political climate in a country. This chapter has traced the beginnings of Cuban revolution and discussed the factors contributing towards the radical change in government which remains in power to this day. In the case of Brazil, we have seen the economic and social instability which culminated in a violent and repressive military dictatorship. Furthermore, this chapter has presented the development of women's movements in both countries which closely correspond to an increased presence of women involved in the production of film production. Having provided a context for all of these factors, with our theoretical framework in chapter one, we are now able to discuss issues of gender and space in Cuban and Brazilian films.

CHAPTER 3: WOMEN IN CUBAN CINEMA

“Es más fácil para una mujer en Cuba ser piloto de avión que directora de cine.”

(Ramírez qtd. in Vilasís1)

In 1979, Pastor Vega released the film *Retrato de Teresa* which won the award for best actress (Daisy Granados) and was nominated for the Golden Prize for direction at the *Moscow International Film Festival*. The movie had a large Cuban audience with 1.5 million Cuban admissions in 1979 (Chanan 359). According to Julianne Burton-Carvajal, the film provoked several debates in newspapers, magazines, television and radio. She asserts that half of the adult population in Cuba saw the film within the first six weeks from the time of its release. The debates were concerned with issues surrounding family traditions as well as “women’s need for self-realization” (Portray 308). As a result, the motion picture has attracted a significant amount of attention from an international audience as well as film scholars. In 1974, Sara Gómez released the first film produced entirely by a female director *De Cierta Manera*. The final editing was done by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, Julio García-Espinosa and Rigoberto López because Gómez died unexpectedly from asthma complications. Her film has received much praise and was awarded the Most Significant film of the Year by the *Selección Annual de la Crítica* in Havana in 1977. More recently, in 1990 a collaboration of directors released the film *Mujer Transparente*, which is composed of five vignettes, with five different women as protagonists. The film also received the award for best collective direction at the *VI Festival de Cine, Video y TV* in Trieste, Italy, in 1991, and also received recognition from FIPRESI (International Federation of Film Critics) at the *12th Latin American International Film Festival* in Havana in

1991.²² The underlying thread that unites these three films is the way in which they directly question the quotidian reality of women in a post-revolutionary society.

In this chapter, I examine the two Cuban films *Retrato de Teresa* and *De Cierta Manera* and a vignette of *Mujer Transparente* titled “Julia,” directed by Mayrta Vilasís. I argue that the three different portrayals participate in dissimilar degrees and levels to the problematization of the logic of gender, attempting to articulate a counter-narrative that frequently utilizes a gendered representation of society. I begin by contextualizing the film and the directors and then focus on the way the films explore the relationship between the transformations of the socio-political and economic structures and their impact within the household as well as the power relations between its members. I draw upon theoretical discussions by Nira Yuval-Davis, Floya Anthias, Gillian Rose and Ann Oberhauser to reflect on the spaces occupied by women in the national project. I conclude by arguing that, although the films raise many interesting issues regarding women in Cuban society, the films remain victims to their times.

3.1 *Retrato de Teresa*

Like most Cuban directors, Pastor Vega began his film career creating documentary films. Prior to film direction, he briefly worked as an actor, and was a founding member of a theater academy run by los hermanos Vicente and Raquel Revuelta. Pastor Vega was one of the founding members of ICAIC and worked as an assistant director while simultaneously doing the same with the theatre company. Vega left his work with the theatre company and began to

²² FIPRESCI is an association composed of professional film critics and film journalists from various countries. The association, founded in 1930, has as its mission the promotion of film culture and the protection of their professional interests.

dedicate himself to film. In 1964 Vega was promoted to work as the director of documentary films, and in 1970 he was granted permission to direct full length feature films. *Retrato de Teresa* was his most successful film and thereafter he became known as the director of the *International Festival of New Latin American Film* held annually in Havana. He passed away in 2005 (“Cinecuba”).

The protagonists of the film are Dasiy Granados as Teresa and Adolfo Llauradó as Ramón. Granados is an accomplished performer closely tied to the tradition of the Cuban cinema. She was discovered by the Cuban director José Massip while acting within a local theatre group in 1964 and was given the title role in his film *La Decisión* (1964). *Retrato de Teresa* brought Granados significant acknowledgement although she had already garnered attention from her roles in other well known Cuban films such as *Memorias del Subdesarrollo* (1967), directed by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea. Many of her films feature women as central characters within the production. She has also received international recognition for her roles in productions outside of Cuba with the Brazilian film *Meteoro* (2002), directed by Diego de la Teixera, and the Spanish production *Cosas que Dejé en La Habana* (1997), directed by Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón. Granados continues to act in Cuban films-- her most recent film is *Madre Coraje y sus Hijos* (2008), directed by Enrique Álvarez. Adolfo Llauradó, like Granados, was also well known prior to *Retrato de Teresa* with films such as *Manuela* (1966, Humberto Sólás), *Lucía* (1968, Humberto Sólás) and *El Otro Francisco* (1974, Sergio Giral) and after the film continued to be successful both in Cuban cinema and television. Prior to filming *Retrato de Teresa*, the two actors had already worked well together in the film *Páginas del Diario de José Martí* (1972, José Massip). Llauradó passed away in 2001.

The production of *Retrato de Teresa* is quite effective in standing out as a film with the

purpose of critically analyzing the problems between gender roles in Cuban society. An important agenda of the Cuban revolution was to eliminate sexism and to open opportunities for women in all aspects of Cuban society. The film is critical of this and problematizes the fact that, although spaces have been created for women in the workforce, they are not equal with their male counterparts, because, in addition to being a hard worker in society, they are still the sole individuals responsible for household duties and raising the children. The film addresses this double standard, and implies that for Cuban society to be truly revolutionary, it needs to be egalitarian providing the same rights and opportunities that are given to women in the workforce, to be given within the household. The film demonstrates the double workload that women endured after the Cuban revolution and criticizes it, at a time historically when this was not done publicly. The Cuban Family Code had been created in 1974 but no one was adhering to this new law. This discrepancy opened an avenue for the film.

As mentioned earlier, *Retrato de Teresa* was very controversial in Cuba when it was released, creating great debate; nevertheless it was a huge success in the box office selling over 1.5 million admissions to see the film, demonstrating that the film was quite popular with large sectors of Cuban society.²³ *Retrato de Teresa* follows the lives of Teresa and Ramón. Teresa is a textile worker, and Ramón is a television repairman. The film portrays the conflicts which arise between the married couple. The couple resides in a quaint white and blue house on a tranquil

²³ *Lucía* can be considered a clear precursor to *Retrato de Teresa* since it also questions the spaces occupied by women in the national project. Released in 1968, *Lucía* also had great success with 1.2 million admissions in 1968. This film tells the story of three women all three of whom are named Lucía. Each woman is filmed in a different historical context. The particular time period presented represents critical moments in Cuban history. The first time period is during the battle for Cuban independence from Spain, the next period is against the Machado regime, and the last historical period is after the Cuban revolution. All three Lucías are involved in their nation's political struggle, be it for independence or for socialist revolution. *Lucía* was the first film of its kind in Cuba in the sense that it was the first film after the creation of ICAIC by the revolutionary government to confront gender inequality in Cuba. The film also influenced other film makers, especially due to the time period and context in which it was produced.

street. The difficulties between the couple surface when Ramón becomes irritated with Teresa for consistently arriving home late because of her work obligations as well as her volunteer work as coordinator for a cultural dance group composed from members of her textile factory. Teresa begins to resent her husband's irritation as well as his lack of involvement in household duties. Their conflict comes to a head when Ramón begins an extra-marital affair.

There has been some scholarship dedicated to the analysis of the film, although I feel it to not be nearly enough. During this time period, when the women's movement was most active, very few films in the developed world presented women as protagonists whom asserted their independence, and fewer dared to question women's subordination within patriarchal societies. Women were often presented as elements within the landscape rather than central objects with agency in cinematic productions. Cuba, in many ways, was at the forefront as a nation that was not afraid to question women's issues and bring them to the mainstream. Yet it is also important to remember that Cuba and Brazil also utilized women to incorporate their vision of the nation simultaneously. For example, the film *De Cierta Manera* (1964) explicitly states through the narrator's voice that Cuba as a nation will remain fragile and precarious until women are not treated equally, because the revolutionary ideal calls for an egalitarian society. Nevertheless, this 'egalitarian' society would also foster a more productive economy resulting in a more stable revolutionary government to the benefit of those in power attempting to establish socialism as the only alternative. It is also important to remember that the island was also held in high regard internationally for its cinematic production and was seen as one of the leaders in the Latin American film industry (Chanan ix).

Catherine Benamou, in commenting on the film in "Cuban Cinema on the Threshold of Gender," notes that the first films to confront women's issues in Cuba were directed by men,

with films such as *Manuela* (1966) and *Lucía* (1968) both directed by Humberto Solás. There was also the documentary *Con las Mujeres Cubanas* (1975) directed by Octavio Cortázar.

Benamou additionally states that these films:

helped to frame intense debates over women's equal participation in the labor force, involving the social and legal definition of what constitutes 'women's work' (brought to the forefront of national attention by the FCW in the sixties and seventies) and concomitantly, responsibility for housework and child care (the latter being formally given to fathers as well as mothers in the Cuban family code of 1975). (69)

The Family Code of 1974 was promulgated through the work of the FCW. The code essentially legalized the notion that men and women needed to divide domestic chores equally: "Artículo 26. Ambos cónyuges están obligados a cuidar la familia que han creado y a cooperar el uno con el otro en la educación, formación y guía de los hijos conforme a los principios de la moral socialista" (FCW 295). The author also goes on to discuss what was called thesis three of the *First Congress of the Communist Party* that highlights "historical perspectives on women's access to the 'man's world' of armed struggle, literacy and politics." This same concern can be seen in the films *Manuela*, *Lucía*, *Retrato de Teresa* and *El Pidio Valdéz*, that critique the lack of participation on behalf of men to contribute to household chores, and allow women to engage in activities outside the home.

The presence of Cuban films dealing with feminist issues can, in a certain way, help us understand its success with a national and international audience. As mentioned earlier, the sixties is a time period historically marked by the active and increasing presence of feminist movements in Cuba as well as the international scenario. As a consequence, films such as *Lucía*,

and *Retrato de Teresa*, for instance, were associated with “women’s quest for equal status with the larger project of the Cuban Revolution” (Benamou 70). The films in a sense could be considered as a level of propaganda disseminated by Castro’s regime because they display the concern for the larger project of the nation by way of the quest for women’s rights. In this sense, in a time period affected by a universal struggle for women’s civil liberties, it is easy to comprehend why Cuba would become a kind of model to be followed.

An important observation made is that almost all of the women projected in the films occupy domestic and industrial spaces: however, they do not have real positions of power which they are negotiating:

Many of the films tended to construct women as preeminently laboring subjects at the expense of their other attributes and their intimate selves. The immediate context for change was often the nuclear family as a productive/reproductive unit (even when change implied divorce) while the ultimate referent and protagonist for change was the national collectivity. Surprisingly, female characters were rarely depicted in positions of public decision-making and were often shown as being counseled at times of crises by sympathetic men. (71)

In terms of the project of the nation, the revolutionary and socialist goals are in fact the real priority while these issues are in fact the real priority while women’s issues (at least those which were not a main concern of the revolution) were relegated to a secondary position. As a result, the project of the nation is constructed within a system which maintains women on the periphery of decision-making processes. Women continue in traditional roles within the nationalist discourse as we will see when we analyze the film. These realities recall the theories of Yuval-

Davis and Floya Anthias when they articulate their third point for discussion which states that women “are seen as participating centrally in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and as the transmitters of its culture” (7).

Furthermore, it is also interesting to note, as will be further discussed later in the chapter, that despite this innovation in film making in terms of a gendered agenda and the entire project of “men’s films about women,” it presents a contradiction (Benamou 74). According to Mayra Vilásis (the director of “Julia” from *Mujer Transparente*), despite the changes these films provoked by questioning traditional gender roles, they were short lived as many of these same film directors went on to make films that were more lenient in their criticisms of a patriarchal society as seen in *Hasta Cierta Punto* (1983) by Tomás Alea, and *Lejanía* (1985) directed by Jesús Díaz (74).

With *Hasta Cierta Punto*, it is quite clear that the film comes up short in presenting a critique of patriarchy because it ultimately reinforces the stereotypes it tries to dismiss. The most telling line, echoed in the title and often cited by critics, emerge when the protagonist is interviewing a male dockworker regarding gender roles and he states “Oh they’ve managed to change my attitudes on that score. I’ve certainly changed *up to a certain point* (*hasta cierto punto*).” I’m probably at eighty percent now. Maybe they can work on me and get me up to say eighty-seven percent. But they will never get me up to one-hundred percent, no way. That thing about equality is OK but only *up to a certain point*” (D’Lugo 281).

This is significant and captures many of the difficulties that can be encountered in Cuban films about women. They are progressive on many levels by shedding light on many important gender issues, yet nevertheless they reinforce certain stereotypes. The scholar Julianne Burton-

Carvajal offers a different interpretation of the film by commenting that *Retrato de Teresa* in many ways is a sequel to part III of *Lucía*. Part III *Lucía* is the post revolutionary and most contemporary *Lucía* who vocalizes the injustices that she faces with her husband and the double standard of having to now work outside the home but also within the home (1). Burton-Carvajal summarizes the film as “the theory practice and ideology of sex/gender relationships in a society undergoing socialist transformation” (*Cinema* 52). I would agree with most of this statement but *Retrato de Teresa* unlike *Lucía* was made in 1979 and the revolution occurred in 1959 so that is already twenty years of a socialist government. Although gender roles are changing within the context of a new political and socio-economic system, twenty years after the fact would be difficult to consider a phase of socialist transition, as this would have occurred several years immediately after 1959.

Another interesting perspective offered by Burton-Carvajal is the use of the title connected to the first few takes of the film. According to Burton-Carvajal, “[t]he title implies a passive (or at least stationary) subject, a certain possessiveness of vision, a simultaneous interpretation and appropriation. It presupposes a portraitist and simultaneously implicates an undefined spectator” then later on she asserts that the title is in fact problematic because “[t]he title is in fact a telling misnomer...Despite its title, Vega’s film is in fact not so much a challenge to as a validation of this position. Though it claims to present a portrait of Teresa, what the film actually constructs is a portrait of a couple, Teresa and Ramon-or, at best, a Portrait of Teresa in terms of her relationship to Ramón” (*Cinema* 54). Although these assertions are quite true, it is still important to keep in mind that at the end of the film Teresa opts to create a new life for herself therefore by no means does the film finish with a static and closed ending, but rather the possibility of her new future with a new beginning, something that *she* will construct. There are

still some constraints that will later be discussed that appear at the end of the film.

With a somewhat different perspective from Burton-Carvajal, the critic Guy Baron in his article “The Illusion of Equality, Machismo and Cuban Cinema of the Revolution” is very critical of the film *Retrato de Teresa*. In his analysis, he also examines the films *De Cierta Manera* and *Hasta Cierta Punto*. He argues that, although both of these films are attempting to criticize a patriarchal society and create room for change, they are actually reinforcing the tendencies that they are trying to dispel:

films that attempted to produce images of gender equality, or at least the possibility of such, merely provided the illusion of equality while maintaining the status quo of patriarchy. That is, the images they present of male-female relations appear on the surface to represent an increasing desire to achieve absolute equality between men and women, whereas close analysis of these films, using various tools of feminist and feminist film theory, reveals a continuation of certain patriarchal tendencies that the films themselves are attempting to criticize. (354)

For the most part, I can agree with Baron’s statements regarding the film *Hasta Cierta Punto*, but many of the critiques (not all) of *Retrato de Teresa* I find to be very forced and not completely valid. The first critique which Baron states is on the linear nature of the film. This narrative format was chosen because the director, like many other Cuban directors, comes from a background of documentary filmmaking, and he chose for the film to have this structure because he wanted the film to feel as “real” as possible. I think this style of filmmaking enhances the storyline. It is not a glamorous or surreal story it is the harsh reality of a woman struggling to support her family, her livelihood and her marriage. Nevertheless, it is important to remember

that documentaries in general seek to construct their own agenda, although this aspect may be easily forgotten due to the ‘portrayal of reality’ it presents.

3.2 The contention of space in *Retrato de Teresa*

It is clear that there have been mixed reviews on the film, but none of these scholars have taken into account the contention of space and gender within the film. These issues are critical tools for analysis because of the way in which human beings perceive and interact with the city via socio-political and cultural practices that determine the new meanings produced by these spaces. The recurrent daily actions of individuals usually reproduce social meanings. Therefore, it is essential to problematize these practices as a means to unveil, their gendered facets. The marked spaces that one negotiates on a day to day basis are a reflection of the societal ideals. This is critical to reflect upon when we observe the films.

The first scene of the film opens with a wide angle shot with Teresa and her three children in the distance. Other Cubans appear besides the family in the take. The family stands against a Malecón in Cuba, a cement wall that backs up against the ocean. There is no music and the lighting is a bit washed out as if the subjects were under the effect of the extreme bright lighting. The camera then begins to zoom in closer thus isolating Teresa and her children while her husband Ramón appears in the distance. The camera then quickly in a new frame displays a close-up of Ramón as he shouts “Teresa.” The next image is a freeze frame and extreme close up of Teresa with her long hair blowing in the wind. Her head is turned slightly and she looks into the distance. Her expression is serious and contemplative. The music then begins, which is the same music that the film ends with, being very typical of this era, it has an instrumental sound

but is very dramatic. The camera then pans around the landscape of Havana, specifically the skyline from above as the music continues.

This opening scene is imperative because it sets the stage for the film and is especially symbolic. The first images of the film present Teresa's family amongst other families on the Malecón. It establishes the universality of the protagonists, pointing to the fact that they are just like any other Cuban family; there is nothing extraordinary about them, they are just ordinary people. The next frame with Ramón calling Teresa's name establishes the dynamic within the family of Ramón calling on Teresa throughout the trajectory of the film. We will later see how him calling her in the first scene is representative of his controlling expectations on her within the parameters of their relationship. The next take, which freezes Teresa's face, creates the desired "portrait of Teresa." She is both beautiful and feminine with her hair blowing in the wind, meanwhile her expression is pensive and serious, which is a premonition for her expressions throughout the film, which continues to exhibit equal facial expressions. Teresa's pensive and serious facial expression seems to serve as a foreshadowing that there is an element off in this portrayal. In fact, the camera attempts to frame her image into the landscape of Havana in a process similar to what Gillian Rose describes when she discusses the dynamics involved in the analysis of a gendered landscape where we can observe "the relation between the natural environment and human society" (193). This image is then recreating the symbols and 'codes' which Rose has discussed representing the 'social power structures' of Havana and Cuba as a whole. These codes are presenting Teresa within the backdrop of urbanized Havana while following the proper 'mother' role as the camera films her caring for her children. The effect of the camera panning the Cuban landscape and the profile of Havana's buildings in the horizon establishes the urban environment which will set the stage for the development of the film.

The next few takes either focus on Teresa working at the textile factory or at a rehearsal with the folkloric dancers that Teresa helps to organize, while Ramón is outside their home. The image of Teresa and Ramón's house is a pleasant medium sized home of typical Caribbean architecture with brightly colored blue trim. It seems that the director once again seeks to contrapose what is seen with what Teresa is feeling/hiding. This scene relates to the first few scenes of the films where we can observe the same dynamics. The next main frame of the film occurs when Teresa is at a workers meeting at the textile factory where she is employed. Here the audience is introduced to an outspoken Teresa who immediately differentiates herself from the other women as being a leader and being extremely outspoken on the issues that she is advocating for at the syndicate meeting. She raises many issues which were major concerns of the time that the women's movements in Cuba were trying to confront such as childcare and nurseries for the children while their mothers were working. She also speaks against husbands "whom don't even raise a finger to help out at home." Teresa receives support from the other men and women of the brigade after making these comments, and they establish major issues which the film will examine yet within the household.

The production, however, does not only provide long sequences which capture Teresa as she is working at the textile factory, but also when she is in the confines of the house. The next significant long sequence of the film, captures Teresa waking early in the morning. The entire frame is black except for the silhouette of Teresa turning off the alarm in the morning. In the next take, the camera presents Teresa in the kitchen. This is a long silent sequence without any sound other than the quiet noises of Teresa in the kitchen. There is only a dimly lit light which displays to the spectator what Teresa is preparing in the kitchen. As Teresa works, her back is to the camera. This scene emphasizes the daily work routine of Teresa every morning. She is alone,

and in silence, preparing the kitchen for the family before they go to school and work. The effect of having her back to the camera implies that this is the work of many women not of one in particular. The viewer is forced to focus on the tasks that Teresa is completing rather than her expression or feelings as she is working. The viewer focuses on the intricacies of preparing breakfast for the family as well as the severity of the work as Teresa moves almost in complete darkness at the early hours of the morning. She does not turn on the radio and listen to salsa but rather solemnly fulfills her tasks. After this long sequence, Teresa begins to wake up her family and prepare them for the day. She is presented to be the center of the family as it is her and only her who prepares the entire family, including her husband for their day. Teresa is so absorbed in caring for everyone in her family that it is only after her children are taken to school that she is able to prepare herself for work that day.

This sequence reaffirms the ideas of Ann Oberhauser when she comments on the invisibility of women's work within the household. In these spaces, women have to "negotiate their time and space" as a means of accomplishing the many demands and multiple roles within the household (166). This becomes evident with Teresa as she not only prepares breakfast, but she dresses her children and ensures that both her children and husband have had enough to eat before they leave the home. It is also interesting to note that there is an adjustment in Teresa's behavior which corresponds to the spaces she is negotiating. In the home, Teresa is presented silently carrying out her daily routine, yet in the workplace Teresa is more vocal. She calls to the attention of her supervisors the many limitations her work brigade has encountered, as well as the need improved child care. She is also quick to express her opinions when directing the textile dance group. In a sense, as Judith Butler notes, Teresa is 'performing' the proper 'scripts' for varying spaces. It is more acceptable for Teresa to be a vocal leader at the workplace, yet at

home she is to be silent and complacent. These differences help the audience reflect on the shortcomings of the (revolution) that, according to their leaders, is still trying to accomplish the project of an egalitarian society. It is apparent that the revolutionary ideals in terms of an egalitarian society have not had an impact on the household dynamic. Teresa maintains this behavior until she is pushed past her threshold and cannot contain her frustration, showing self awareness and a level of questioning of the established status quo. It seems that women are the ones who need to be aware of this reality and struggle for their rights.

The long sequence attempts to make the audience visualize the daily chores which are integral to the lives of so many families consequently, which are usually undervalued or simply considered invisible. However, this oppression contributes little by little towards revolt as well as resentment and also points towards the shortcomings of the revolution. The sequence gains significance when we have in mind that “It is in the family - as the effect of kinship structures- that women as women are produced, are defined within and by the group” (Cowie 131). Stemming from this definition as the ‘wife’ who completes domestic duties, there is a collapse in communication between Teresa and Ramón as they both become frustrated with each other. The most natural space for these frustrations to be expressed is within the home, reinforcing the oppressive nature of this space which isolates Teresa from the rest of the community.

There is another interesting scene of the film, when Teresa is at dance rehearsal after work. She is on a public phone speaking with Ramón about what time she will be arriving home that evening. Because of a very poor connection, she cannot hear Ramón well. This scene is very telling because, as Teresa yells into the phone, it foreshadows the problems, the growing lack of communication to come, as Teresa and Ramón have a heated argument when she arrives home late. All of the major disputes between Teresa and Ramón occur within the confines of their

home in a private and domestic sphere. This first major conflict between Ramón and Teresa occurs in their bedroom. The argument escalates into violent as the couple pushes each other -- Ramón is clearly more aggressive than Teresa as he violently grabs her. A critical scene in is when Teresa states that she does not want to be a slave like her mother and her grandmother; cooking cleaning and ironing. Ultimately Ramón leaves. Once again, in terms of space, Teresa remains with her children and within the household after the dispute. On the other hand, Ramón, already much more mobile than Teresa, leaves the household and goes to the street. In this sense, although Teresa caused the argument by defending her rights and desires, she is the one who stays at home in a private space and takes care of her children at night, while her husband leaves. Here we can again see how Teresa is constricted within the home as she is both physically and symbolically 'trapped' in the home.

Yet the house also serves as a space of resistance because it is here that Teresa becomes more conscious of her situation and begins to feel resentment. The traditional idea that the private (house) and public (work) spaces are disconnected is challenged in the film when we realize that, although trying to adjust herself to different scripts, Teresa is not happy and cannot completely fulfill the roles she is expected to perform. The identity of being the "perfect" mother and wife does not seem to be enough for her. Much to the contrary, the contrast between her behavior at work/theater and home seem to imply the need for changes in the traditional roles and patterns that regulate life in society. Along these lines, the changes in the meaning of these practices result in changes in the meanings traditionally attributed to the public and private spaces. Only when these issues are really challenged, we will truly promote family.

Another very significant scene of the film is when Teresa is discussing her problematic situation with her mother. In this scene, although Teresa is not in her own home, she is in a

private venue; within the confines of her mother's home. Aside from the space in which they begin their discussion, it is the nature of their discussion that is the most disturbing yet very telling of the film. Teresa's mother encourages Teresa to tolerate her husband and the predicament that she in the way that she herself did with her husband. She encourages her daughter to be submissive and focus solely on her family and not her personal endeavors. This is critical because it exemplifies how women themselves perpetuate a patriarchal discourse, and it highlights the need for changes in attitudes towards women's roles to not only come from men rather from women as well across all generations of life. Teresa's mother states that "women belong in the home..., and that women will continue being women and men will continue being men, no one can change that, not even Fidel." This is a very interesting situation because Teresa's mother is reinforcing a patriarchal discourse, and Teresa's inability to connect to some of the other women and express her problems with Ramón represents a particular disconnect between women. Denise M. Dipuccio affirms this in her article on the presentation of historical female figures of the Golden Age such as Saint Teresa of Avila and Queen Isabela of Spain by the female playwright Concha Romero, who parodies the dismemberment of Saint Teresa among other things in her play. Dipuccio states:

Contrary to what one may believe, plays written by women about women are not inherently feminist. Female dramatists also run the risk of perpetuating sexist and elitist values. This danger may be especially imposing when writing a historical piece about women who already have the reputation of being important or famous figures in their nations past. (225)

By extension, one cannot assume that all women will subvert a patriarchal discourse which marginalizes women. Returning to the statement made by Teresa's mother, this declaration

implies gender differences to be biological, a naturally given state that not even ‘revolutionary’ Cuba (which everyone thought was impossible) could change this inherent division between the sexes. Teresa’s mother accepts that it is not fair and admits she ‘suffered and tolerated’ her late husband, but she accepted it, although this position is precisely the opposite of what Teresa seeks to do. In the next scene, Teresa admits to one of her friends that she is taking tranquilizers to help her cope with her difficult situation. This seems to be accepted by her friend and others around Teresa who do not seem to understand the severity of the difficulties at home that she is faced to confront as she mentions taking a leave from work.

Nevertheless, not all the moments in the film are so tense. For instance, when Teresa is at home and dancing with her son; this is the only scene in the entire film in which Teresa seems to be truly happy and smiling. She is exuberant and full of life. The camera takes a wide angle shot and focuses on the two of them dancing while the television plays the disco music. Ramón enters the home and is affectionate with his son and surprises Teresa. Ultimately the two sleep together, although Teresa seems to resist at first. This is the second time that Teresa, although angry with Ramón, is not able to resist him and succumbs to his advances only to see him leave afterwards. This is interesting because this scene seems to attempt to imply that being a mother is still something inherent to women. The film points towards the idea that the way in which family life is structured is the problem because women feel resentful. While doing the chores for the family, we can observe that Teresa was sad and her withdrawn face was apparent. On the other hand, just being with her son makes her alive. These images foster the ideas that mothers are also integral elements to the larger project of the nation.

According to Julianne Burton-Carvajal, another noteworthy scene that is very critical of the Cuban media in perpetuating a paternalistic tone is seen when Tomás and Teresa are being

interviewed on television regarding their direction of the textile dance company and their upcoming competition. The host makes several sexist comments to both Teresa and Ramón. First he notes that is not there a bit of a 'sissy' connotation in being a man directing a dance ensemble, and rather than get angry, Tomás just laughs and disregards the comment, which implies that it is not very manly of him to be engaging in a discipline associated with a feminine aesthetic. The subsequent sexist comments are directed towards Teresa and they solely focus on her beauty and physical appearance rather than her determination as the leader of the dance ensemble. Like Tomás, Teresa is submissive and smiles while attempting to disregard the comments. Teresa was also the second one to be interviewed and is virtually ignored while the host interviews Tomás. Teresa is thus treated merely as an object by the host by only commenting on her appearance and on the concerns of her husband for letting her out of the home to work with Tomás, and furthermore adds insult to injury by stating that the two of them would make a nice couple. Their response is a nervous laugh. Once again Ramón is not in the home or someone else's home but outside playing cards when ironically he is asked to fix the television showing Teresa being interviewed.

This interview is one element of multiplicity of other agents/institutions that attempt to reinforce a series of habits, beliefs, institutions of knowledge such as schools, churches, and community organizations which function as forces which assimilate discourses of proper values and morals as a way of attempting to organize and localize individuals within a social structure. According to Judith Butler, these varying instances of power attempt to legitimize practices which incorporated into daily life function as a means to coerce these individuals to internalize these value systems as their own (Bezerra 519). This scene contributes towards establishing a moral and social code of conduct as the interviewer is quick to put Teresa in her place as an

ornament and Tomás is presented as the legitimate director of the dance production. The scene also reinforces how the traditional stereotypes of women and men are perpetuated. Consequently it becomes clear that Ramón's behavior is in fact in line with a public discourse which demeans women. It is also interesting to note the reactions of Teresa and Tomás who are clearly uncomfortable with the statements of the interviewer. The host however exerts a level of power of 'régime of truth' as discussed by Michel Foucault over the colleagues and neither one dares to question his remarks.

Ultimately Ramón leaves the young girl with whom he was having an affair, receives a promotion to be transferred to Santiago and asks for Teresa to forgive him and move to Santiago with him. The last sequence of the film shows the only argument between the couple outside of the confines of the household and within mid-day Havana filled with people. Ramón repeatedly tells Teresa that he is a changed man and that by having the affair he has realized that *she* is in fact the woman that he loves and that now he is sure of it. Teresa insists on asking Ramón if it would be acceptable to him to forgive *her* if she had engaged in an extramarital affair as he had. Ramón responds by saying "no, it's different I am a man, it's different." This scene points to once again, another double standard within the confines of marriage. Not only is the wife supposed to tend to the household duties but she is also required to accept and tolerate a husband's infidelity. The film ends with Teresa walking away from Ramón while he follows her through the crowds of Havana.

This scene is telling because Teresa leaves Ramón in a public space. She is no longer confined by the walls of her household or the duties of caring for her children. She is in the street in an urban uncontrolled environment, an environment where Ramón was most frequently seen, and until this last scene it is one of the few where Teresa is neither at work, at home, nor at

rehearsal. The music played during this last scene is also critical to understanding the film because while Teresa leaves Ramón behind salsa music begins playing with the singer stating “you reap what you sow...when her rooster dies she looks for another man..polish the floor ...Teresa...Listen Teresa ..polish the floor..Teresa.” Ramon stops looking for Teresa because she is lost in the masses of Cuban people. The implication here is that Ramón has reaped what he sowed as the song states. He has lost Teresa, and she is not likely to return. The emphasis of the lyrics of Teresa polishing the floor indicate that Teresa has reached her threshold of discrimination and inequality thus leaving it *and* Ramón behind. However, it is also important to be aware of a shortcoming of the closing scene because the lyrics state that Teresa will find another man. The implication here is that Teresa’s existence in a sense must rely on her relationship to another man. This creates an equation where a woman can only exist in society with a heterosexual relationship, and indirectly it is still inscribing the “adequate” gender roles. There is no room for other alternatives. Teresa wears a white headband and unlike other scenes where her hair is loose and unrestrained, Teresa’s hair is taught. Her expression is firm and determined. The film closes with a freeze frame shot of Teresa again akin to the beginning of the film, looking away from the camera. The symbolism in Teresa walking amongst other people is significant because she is leaving Ramón to create her own new reality where she can control what and where she desires to be, although up to a certain point, because she is only envisioned in terms of her relation to a man.

Retrato de Teresa was an innovative and creative film for its time but, due some of its contradictions after a close analysis, it is not as provocative as it could have been towards facilitating changes in Cuban gender roles. As we will see in the following section, *De Cierta Manera* presents a stronger female protagonist while heavily emphasizing women’s roles within

the revolutionary ethic.

3.3 *De Cierta Manera*

Sara Gómez directed *De Cierta Manera* in 1974, and is considered by many as a pioneer for female film directors in Cuba. Of Afro-Cuban ancestry, she succeeded in an industry dominated by white men. As noted earlier, to this date Gómez is the only woman to have directed a full length feature film, a divergence which will be discussed at the conclusion of this dissertation. Gómez was first trained as a musician at the Conservatory of Music in Havana. She became involved in journalism, and then became interested in film and joined ICAIC in 1961. She became the assistant to the directors Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Jorge Fraga. While working as an assistant on several documentary films, she began to develop her own ideas and later moved on to direct several documentary films pertaining to issues on race, gender, Afro-Cuban traditions, and popular culture. *De Cierta Manera* was her fictional debut and received much acclaim, although it took several years for it to be released to the public due to complications with the 35 mm film she used. In addition to working as a groundbreaking filmmaker, she was the mother of two children. She passed away at the age of thirty-one from complications of asthma. Her contributions to Cuban cinema have not been forgotten and the recent documentary by the Swedish director Alessandra Mueller *Dónde está Sara Gómez?* on Gomez's life and the creation of *De Cierta Manera* is a testament to this fact.

De Cierta Manera is a multifaceted production that touches on many predominant issues pertinent to Cuban society after the revolution such as gender roles, marginalization, workers ethic, education, and creating an improved revolutionary society. The two protagonists of the

film are Yolanda, played by Yolanda Cuellar, and Mario, played by Mario Balmaneda. *De Cierta Manera* was the only film Cuellar was ever featured in. Balmaneda, on the other hand, was an actor in two films prior to *De Cierta Manera* and he continued to be a successful actor in well known films such as *La Última Cena* (1976, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea) and *Se Permuta* (1983, Juan Carlos Tabío). According to Michael Chanan, *De Cierta Manera* is set in 1961 at a time where “[o]ne of the revolution’s first major projects to tackle the countries enormous housing problem, five new neighborhoods were built for people living in Las Yaguas, a Havana slum that was one of the worst” (346).

The scholar Michael Chanan describes the reviews of the film to conclude that it was “seen, with great justification ... as a feminist film, but in Cuba the term *feminism* was not part of the revolutionary vocabulary because of overtones of antagonistic confrontation between men and women that were regarded as unwelcome—perhaps an indication of the degree to which Cuban society remained patriarchal” (349). Furthermore, in terms of a gendered critique, Chanan discusses that according to his interpretation of the film “[t]he struggle for women’s equality in Cuba ... (not women’s rights: the Revolution has given them these already), is a struggle against machismo, which has to be joined by men and women together, within the Revolution, because machismo is one of the symptoms of underdevelopment” (349). I agree with this assertion because it underlines not only women’s rights as important issues, but deep seated societal attitudes that the film tries to address.

Mario and Yolanda live and work within a community in the area of Miraflores. Yolanda is a school teacher who has been placed in the community of Las Yaguas to work with the underprivileged children of the area. Mario is a local bus repair worker. The two meet at a household get together and are immediately attracted to each other. The film revolves around

their relationship and problematizes obstacles within each of their places of employment. In the case of Yolanda, she has difficulty with the underachieving abilities of her students due to the lack of involvement of their parents and their marginalized status. Mario, on the other hand, has a conflict with a friend and co-worker Humberto, who is deceitful to their workers brigade in reference to missing several days at work. He is dishonest to the other employers and claims that he was caring for his mother who was ill, when in fact he was in Oriente (a province of Cuba) with a woman he was dating.

Enmeshed in the plot, there is a documentary filmic style which disrupts the narrative segments by historicizing the revitalization of the neighborhood of Las Yaguas. This restructuring of the area is designed to eliminate the shanty towns of the community to improve housing conditions by erecting several buildings. The sequences explain the history of the neighborhood and are narrated by a voice which provides factual information on the region. These takes also exhibit members of the community speaking on the difficulties of living in the community. Other documentary scenes describe the importance of sugar importation in Cuba as it was exploited while it was a Spanish colony. This explains the need for West African slaves. The narrator then begins to explain the African traditions of Abacua which were brought to the island and ultimately viewed women as traitors resulting from an unacceptable act of betrayal. The commentator also notes the patriarchal and male chauvinist tendencies brought to the island by Spanish sailors. It is then noted that this combination has contributed towards a patriarchal Cuban society.

The last documentary sequence focuses on the tendency of marginalized workers to not embrace the revolution and become productive workers. It is stated how these marginalized individuals do not take advantage of everything the revolution has to offer them, and in order for

the nation and the revolution to be successful, all members of society must not be indolent, rather must become hard working individuals and productive workers to create a fruitful socialist nation. The documentary sequences seem to bring a certain level of legitimacy to the film. Their historical nature creates the sense that the vision of the film is factual. Due to the films neo-realist interpretation there is no need for abstract interpretation. The reality, in fact, is that the film is attempting to show the 'truth' which for the revolutionary government was to create popular support for their cause. The historical 'voice/narrator' heard in these sequences repeatedly points towards the decadency of the island (represented by the destruction of the buildings) is correlated to an excess of foreign influence on the island. Historically, Cubans were not in control of their island. They were not living in an autonomous space which was rightfully theirs. The film continues to express the notion that capitalism functions within convert means to extract resources. It is presented cinematically that only through the revolutionary structure can Cubans take hold of their own spaces to determine their own existence. It also points to the way these foreign influences affected the Cubans manner of being. It seems to point to a primordial time in which patriarchal values were not part of their society.

The opening scene of the film presents a workers brigade meeting, where the worker's committee is deciding the fate of Mario's good friend and co-worker Humberto. Humberto is deceitful regarding his mother's sickness as a means for excusing his presence from work for consecutive days. During the conclusion of the meeting, a clearly distraught Mario stands up and uncovers the true motives behind Humberto's absence from work. After his declarations, Mario leaves the meeting and the camera follows him as he walks on the street. The film comes full circle by opening and closing the film with the same sequence. The scene when Mario begins to speak against Humberto is thus repeated. The next take following the workers' meeting from the

beginning of the film, is that of a crane holding a demolition ball destroying a building. The film then breaks into a documentary approach discussing the changes made in the neighborhood. The three segments within the film; the historical/documentary sections, the images of the buildings being destroyed, and the images of Mario in the workers' meeting repeat themselves throughout the film.

Several scenes capture the destruction of the older buildings of Las Yaguas. As already established by the narrative voice, the images reinforce the statements made of the problematic neighborhood. The revolution seeks to eliminate and 'destroy' the barriers which hinder its success. As the cranes systematically destroy the old buildings, they are simultaneously attempting to eradicate individualistic capitalist thought. From their perspective, this is what contributes to poverty. These former thought processes marginalize sectors of the population leaving them uneducated and without resources. The purpose of the revolution is to revitalize these areas in Las Yaguas and throughout the entire island. They seek to educate and employ all of these marginalized individuals within a common goal. The construction of the new buildings as seen towards the end of the film represents the achievements the revolution has created. The space, the neighborhood of Las Yaguas, has been rectified within a revolutionary ethic, attributing it with new meanings. Consequently, the meeting of the workers is in a space in flux. In order to stabilize this collective space and achieve improved housing for the community, it is up to the individual actors on a day to day basis to maintain the ideals of the revolution. Humberto is presented as an obstacle to this goal.

During this transition from a linear narrative, there are the first scenes that we see of Yolanda incorporated, where she is with her school children and then she is being interviewed. The camera moves very quickly during the takes, and the frames are edited in a way in which the

scenes transition from the buildings in the community to images of families, followed by takes of Yolanda in varying locations. During the brief interview, Yolanda states that the low level of the school children is not what she expected. The reality of the community is something that she had never been exposed to, nor was it something that she even thought existed. This sequence highlights the pre-existing disparities within the Cuban population. Yolanda, in a sense, is portrayed as naïve regarding the reality of struggling households upon making these statements. She is also reluctant to want to continue teaching at the school at the beginning. Towards the end of the film, Yolanda perseveres at the school, as does Mario by standing for his beliefs and defending workers responsibilities in the name of the revolution despite adversity.

In another sequence the film follows Yolanda and Mario along a river discussing their lives and learning about each other. It quickly becomes apparent that Yolanda and Mario come from two very different socio-economic realities. Yolanda speaks of her parents who were also teachers and well educated who had “resources,” as she states, while Mario explains his lack of interest in school and living in the underprivileged neighborhood of Las Yaguas. His emphasis is on life “on the streets” and his lack of direction until he went into the military, which he states “saved him.” For Mario, the streets are safe, they are where he feels comfortable although this life on the streets is associated with poverty and crime. He was ‘saved’ by the military and in the same vein the revolution by being taken away from this reality. Yolanda, on the other hand, already has a secure home and work ethic although she is in a very traditional female role as a school teacher. Nevertheless, Yolanda and Mario become a kind of symbol of the Cuban people because they both have their shortcomings and limitations; however they defend the revolution at all costs.

Further into the film there is a focus on the problematic interactions of Yolanda with her students, one in particular Lázaro who frequently misbehaves in class. Yolanda then meets with Lázaro's mother who explains her convoluted life as a single mother of over five children, with several abusive men, living as a beggar, and trying to survive with minimal resources. Later in the film, there is a scene of Yolanda meeting with another mother in a similar predicament to Lázaro's mother who has eleven children as a single parent and works a full time job. This is another situation where we see a woman who is confined by her status as a mother and by her lack of education. On the other hand, it is a way for Yolanda who is frustrated with her underachieving students to really comprehend their struggles thus giving her more insight as she strives to become a more effective teacher and revolutionary citizen. Therefore, we can say that Yolanda is the portrayal of the revolutionary citizen the government desires. A well educated woman trying to help her *comañeros* to achieve her status in order to promote the progress of the country.

The frames throughout the film alternate between the daily life of Yolanda and the daily life of Mario. These sequences usually present Mario in a very stereotypical 'male' role playing dominoes and drinking with his friends in the street, while his friends gossip about the women in their lives. On the other hand, Yolanda is never seen in a similar position in the film socializing with her female friends and gossiping about their 'boyfriends.' The images of Yolanda are focused on her either at her workplace or with Mario for the most part.

Differing perspectives on class are apparent in a sequence where Yolanda and Mario are dining together with another couple at an upscale restaurant. Yolanda goes to the bathroom with her friend who notes her disapproval for Mario as an appropriate love interest for Yolanda. She notes that a woman of her stature should not be dating a man with a gold tooth. She pretences her

statement by stating that she is all for the revolution and equality, but up to a certain point. This scene clearly marks the difficulties in the integration of different socio-economic classes after the revolution. Although such a statement does not adhere a revolutionary ethic, it exhibits how racial and economic disparities did not disappear after the revolution. Yolanda seems to disregard the stereotypical observations of her friend and continues to enjoy the company of Mario. Again we have a sequence where it is clear that prior to the revolution, Yolanda and Mario inhabited opposite socio-economic spheres, and the revolution has equalized the classes although stigmas remain. The gold tooth is perceived as a mark of unrefinement by Yolanda's friend who is still holding to her privileged societal status while as we will see in *A Hora da Estrela* a mouth full of gold teeth is a mark of achievement and prosperity for others of a marginalized class.

From the beginning of the film, Yolanda asserts that she is an independent woman and attributes the failure of her first marriage to this fact. Another clear example of this is when Mario is clearly frustrated with Yolanda after she left him waiting for her for over an hour due to problems at work. Mario responds to this problem in a very stereotypically male attitude by forcefully grabbing Yolanda and taking her into the movie theater. Yolanda again asserts her independence by leaving the theater and ultimately tells Mario their relationship is over. The argument is sidetracked by Mario's encounter with his friend Guillermo.

The only intimate scene between Yolanda and Mario where they are in a bedroom together is very brief. Michael Chanan notes that this room is something that the revolution established in the area that allowed couples to be intimate with one another, and they utilize the rooms by the hour. It is in this space that Yolanda and Mario seem most to be truly at peace together. Yolanda mocks Mario's 'macho' behavior in a non-threatening manner. In this space,

they are able to make fun of their behavior without the societal pressures dictating the way they should behave. The room emphasizes the precarious situation of the neighborhood and notes (to Cubans) that were familiar with these rooms, how the regime accommodates the needs of its citizens. On the other hand, the space reaffirms the ‘codes of conduct’ in terms of gender roles outside of these private spaces. In the case of Ramón and Teresa, the private space reaffirms a patriarchal mode of thought while with Mario and Yolanda it has an opposing effect. In this case, the film seems to point to the constraints of part of a public space that needs to be challenged so that individuals can be themselves. This argument brings back the question of the documentary that correlates poverty and patriarchal values to the colonizers.

The film attempts to inscribe a new role for women when it constructs an intelligent, strong and independent woman with whom Mario discusses his ideas. In this sense, the film brings some of the elements that were part of the revolutionary project and advances it a bit by giving women a more central role. One example is when Mario speaks up at the workers meeting and discusses with Yolanda what he did. They are at her home, and she states that she approves of his actions, while Mario is very remorseful of his behavior. This frame does not last long, and then in the next frame Mario is having a similar discussion with a friend to the one he had with Yolanda in regards to his actions. Like Yolanda, his friend agrees with his actions against Humberto. Nevertheless Mario makes a very revealing statement by saying that he behaved like a woman, because he did not defend his friend. He continues by stating that “It’s men whom made the revolution anyway” and he did not act like a man, rather a woman.²⁴ These statements

²⁴ In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler discusses how various discourses attempt to correlate sex to gender and then to desire – a perception that does not give many alternatives to individuals. Butler argues that gender should be seen as a construction that changes historically. This means that the relationship between gender –sex - desire is fluid. Butler asserts that the process of materialization of the body is intimately connected to a demand to repudiate certain forms of desire/identification. The imposition of a (heterosexual) symbolic system seeks to prescribe and proscribe the possibilities of thinking the individual, producing a régime of truth about the individual. This is basically what

contribute towards Gomez's critique of a patriarchal paradigm, by having Mario explicitly state this, because it captures the utter contradiction of Mario and of the revolution. As we have seen in the earlier chapter, it is clear that both men and women were key actors within the revolutionary struggle against Batista. Yet after the revolution few women took on key roles within the government (with the exception of Vilma Espín and a few others). Mario's statement represents a common misconception that the revolution was a cause created by men for women, which was not the case. This scene clearly points towards this fallacy, and marks it as a critical thought needing change.

In terms of gender as performance, Guy Baron draws from Laura Mulvey's approach to examine the scene:

But Mario, apart from during the opening few moments of the film, in no way controls the narrative. In fact, at times he is completely out of control of his situation, and, in particular of his relationship with Yolanda. In one scene, when they are discussing their respective histories on a walk in the countryside, Yolanda stands in front of Mario and confronts him, leaving him shrugging his shoulders in confusion as she then turns and walks away, having completely controlled this particular episode. Mario is left in shot, ostensibly free to 'perform,' a performance in which, in traditional Hollywood narrative, the male 'articulates the look and creates the action' (Mulvey, 1975: 41). But he has no idea what to do with the opportunity to perform, shrugs his shoulders and, head bowed, meekly follows Yolanda. The male spectator, therefore, having at first identified with Mario (a first misrecognition), then suffers another misrecognition as he

happens to Mario when he says that he behaved like a woman – he is referring to these prescribed models (hegemonic configurations of gender) to which individuals are requested to adjust themselves.

fails to 'perform' gender adequately. (357)

We can see that Mario does not fulfill the stereotype of the traditional man, it is possible that his lower class position and the urge to make men realize the need to revise their values can explain his attitudes in the film.

The last takes of the film focus on several images. There is a very long take of other bus workers discussing the actions taken by Mario, where they express their thoughts on the revolution. One telling quote is when a worker states, "the revolution is bigger than all of us and we need to die defending it." The camera pans to an image of the wrecking ball on a building. In images that alternate rapidly, the camera presents a very elegantly dressed Yolanda near the school grounds with a brief image of Mario looking through a fence. This decision to shoot a take with Mario looking through a fence foreshadows the constraints to his future and consequently that of the nation. If Mario does not supersede his past and traditions which must remain behind, he will continue to be constrained behind societal ideals and outlooks which will take him backwards; away from Yolanda and away from forging a truly revolutionary society.

The last scene of the film is symbolic for several reasons. The first level of analysis can be made on the images of Mario and Yolanda in this last take. They are clearly arguing amongst each other but their voices are muted and caustic music is played in the background. Despite the fact that there is an argument between the two of them and their expressions are serious and emotional, they remain walking *together*. As they continue to walk together, they are centered in the middle of the frame. The camera zooms out. The implication, then, is that although Yolanda and Mario can come from two different realities, and do not always see eye to eye, they will continue to have a relationship. It will be a relationship in which they learn about each other and

have disagreements but they will remain together. This adjoining of separate socio-economic classes and perspectives is what the revolution is looking to achieve; that is, for diverse populations to come together under the umbrella of a socialist and revolutionary nation. Another very crucial element to the film is the fact that as Yolanda and Mario walk off into the distance, they are walking in between two urban structures. These two buildings are likely to have been the fruits of the demolition that occurred in the neighborhood which was the backdrop to the film. There are no longer images of building being destroyed, rather there are images of a clean and restored neighborhood which Mario and Yolanda traverse together in the closing scenes of the film. This represents a new rectified revolution, which may encounter setbacks and difficulties (as seen with Yolanda and Mario) but will continue to move forward.

The film has a very clear message and commitment towards the revolution. *De Cierta Manera* focuses heavily on presenting the aspects in society which are detrimental to the revolution and that need to be changed, such as workers who are not loyal or productive as presented with Humberto. In order to move forward, Mario is presented as a man who needs to advance with the revolution and leave such counterproductive tendencies behind, such as passing time 'on the street' or defending friends who are corrupt or lazy. Those whom are like Mario need to end their wavering from being revolutionary and defending the old ways and move towards the future with the revolution.

When Mario meets with his good friend Guillermo to discuss his difficulties with Yolanda, we can see another example of this perspective. In addition to being a boxing coach, he is a guitar playing songwriter, whose music is played during the closing sequences of the film. Guillermo's advice to Mario is for him to leave his former life behind. He asserts that to leave his safe environment, to which he has become accustomed, and to attempt something new is

braver than remaining where he is comfortable. This statement holds broader implications than it may seem. Mario, unlike Yolanda, comes from an impoverished neighborhood in Havana and this environment is where he has met Yolanda. Although he is employed and is a loyal, dutiful citizen within the revolutionary system, he remains facing a dilemma. Should he leave his old ways behind, or should he forge a new relationship with Yolanda with the new values and traditions of the revolution, where the 'code of the street' and defending your compadres' falls to the wayside over the ideals of the revolution? Mario's dilemma is one facing many male members of society at this point in time historically, and the film is quite evident in highlighting the importance of individual quotidian decisions and how what may seem to be rather small and insignificant are in fact a foundation for the success of the revolution. It is also important to call to attention to the fact that most of the tensions lived by the characters are related to their work place, the bus repair venue and the school, spaces the revolution was very concerned with in terms of national progress.

Yolanda, on the other hand, is the model of a true revolutionary woman. She is dedicated, hardworking and loyal to the revolutionary cause. She not only thinks in the present but is also concerned about the future, as in a moment during an interview when she states that she is concerned about the future generations of women whom do not receive an education past the sixth grade once they are married, while young boys enlist in the military and have more opportunism. In relation to Mario and others, Yolanda is consistently assertive and independent. She is never submissive or easily persuaded. Yolanda's character in this sense is more confident than Teresa's because Teresa attempts to acquiesce to her husband by taking time off of work and staying in the home. This in the case of Yolanda would never happen. Furthermore, Yolanda although very feminine and elegant, is never shown as weak or fragile. Even with her colleagues

at her school, she is determined that her aggressive methods of communicating with her students and their parents are effective while her colleagues question this.

Although we can approach the film as maintaining a feminist ethic, the film relates to architectural changes and men's change in terms of the new project of the nation. All of these elements result in being viewed as part of the revolutionary project which is the main objective. The film seems to point towards the connection between architectural change and individual actions through the relationship of Yolanda and Mario. The changes between the couple seem to represent this process of transformation.

3.4 *Mujer Transparente*

The third film to be discussed is *Mujer Transparente*. This film was released in 1990 and was the result of the collaboration of several up and coming Cuban directors; Hector Veitía, Mayra Segura, Mayra Vilasís, Mario Crespo, and Ana Rodríguez. The director of *Lucía*, Humberto Solás, assisted in the coordination of the film. The film is significant because, aside from Sára Gómez's film *De Cierta Manera*, it is the only other full length feature film not directed exclusively by a man. *Mujer Transparente* is the compilation of a series of shorts on the lives of different women in Cuban society. The women in each of the shorts are the protagonists, and each short begins with the name of the protagonist written onto the first sequence. The film is divided into five segments; Isabel, Adriana, Julia, Zoe and Laura. As implied by the title of the film, all of the women of different ages and circumstances are one way or another marginalized in their lives. The film provides a space for the intimate feelings and perspectives of these women and provides insight into the measures taken by these protagonists to confront their

reality. Although this film was not as successful as the others in terms of distribution, it has laid the groundwork for up and coming directors and provided a space for a new direction in Cuban Cinema.

The vignette to be analyzed is that of the director Mayra Vilasís titled “Julia” Vilasís was a writer and documentary film director. She became involved with INCAIC in 1974, and in 1976 she began to work as an assistant director and scriptwriter. In 1985 she filmed her first documentary. In addition to being a film director, Vilasís was a published critic and scholar. “Julia” was her only fictional work as a director. Vilasís passed away in 2002. The sequence is the third sequence of the entire film strategically placed after the short of an older woman isolated in her home, and placed before a short of a young artistic college student. The short of “Julia” dialogues well with the other vignettes because Julia is middle aged. She is not as isolated as the preceding sequence yet not as naïve and independent as Isabel in the following short. In the film, the protagonist whom is portrayed by the well known actress Mirta Ibarra, recounts her failed marriage via her accounts from her dimly lit home, usually her bedroom, as well as flashbacks which are very telling towards the development of her character. Ibarra has acted in many recent Cuban productions such as *Fresa y Chocolate* (1994), and *Guantanamera* (1995). Her characters are charismatic and attractive, yet assertive and frequently witty.

Julia lives alone in a moderate sized apartment in an urban environment. She describes how her husband, a philosophy professor, left her for one of his students. While Julia describes the student and the nature of their relationship, the camera switches to scenes with her ex-husband. Julia then proceeds to describe her brief relationship with a young man after her separation from her husband solely to feel desired. Other sequences present Julia dismissed by her husband as he declares that they are not to have children without taking into consideration

Julia's desires or expectations. Julia then describes the situation while the camera shortly displays her former husband's lover leaving him. The vignette draws to a close when Julia is in her neighborhood and sees her husband's car drive by. With an utter sense of urgency, she rushes home and waits for his arrival as she states that they had not seen each other for over a year. The closing scene displays the door to the apartment opening.

A noteworthy quote is when Julia states to the camera "my marriage was my dream, but it was the failure of my life." This citation furthermore is quite significant because it captures what has occurred throughout the film. Julia as a person and as a woman is only defined in her relation to/against a man. For her as woman, a successful life is not determined by her career but by the nature of her marriage. The expectation of a woman is to marry and have children. If the woman does not achieve this or falls in the periphery of this dialectical relationship then she is labeled as a failure. Julia has internalized these value systems and deems her unsuccessful marriage as the failure of her life. It is the failure of her life because it appears that her very existence hinges on its success or its failure, and this adds more fuel to the fire.

Julia's position of narrating her marriage from the confines of her apartment emphasizes her connection to the domestic sphere. Although she does not have any children, she is constantly subjected to the desires of her husband who would only go on to betray her regardless. The irony is that, despite her adventures with a younger man, and despite their failed marriage as she states, Julia at the end of the film rushes home to create a chance encounter with her former husband. These actions signify that she is still tied to the relationship in spite of the fact that she is able to look backwards critically.

This segment connects well with *Retrato de Teresa* because it presents the collapse of a marriage as is the case between Teresa and Ramón. However, over ten years later, we are presented with a similar predicament of a spouse who is unfaithful to his wife, and who is neither perceptive nor attentive to the needs of his wife, thus contributing to the disintegration of their relationship. Both women are subjected to the power and the needs of their husbands and they both strive to submit to their desires. Although Julia is not seen performing the “feminine” chores at the house like Teresa, she is also restricted to the space of the house as the place where she experiences the patriarchal codes more deeply. By showing the impossibility of adjusting themselves to the prescribed roles, these women challenge discourses who have attempted to inscribe a certain *régime of truth* about the individuals. As discussed by Foucault, these roles and the meanings attributed to spaces/practices are ascribed by a diversity of discourses that attempt to construct and control the subjects. To maintain this system, subjects are required to perform various practices that, as discussed by Butler, attempt to prescribe the appropriate and acceptable roles within society.

Unlike in *Retrato de Teresa*, the spectator is allowed to witness Julia’s relationship with another man, nevertheless an important distinction to be made is that Julia’s relationship with the young man is after her separation from her husband. Another significant difference between the two films is that *Retrato de Teresa* concludes with Teresa in a public space, while Julia remains within her home. The implication of most of the sequences filmed in the home, and the closing scene with Julia’s former husband entering the doorway, create a definite sense of spatial entrapment as noted by K. Nelson who notes that “spatial entrapment” is where a woman can be physically limited in the amount of spaces and/ or areas she may enter due to her daily responsibilities typically allocated to women. Due to this confinement, women have less

bargaining ability. We can see that Julia is cut off from the rest of society although she feels safe in this space since it allows her to question her situation. It is interesting that by doing it (the questioning) within the “sacred” space of femininity, the film seems to deconstruct the idea of confinement, bringing other meanings (although not the best) for women. The house then in a sense, can be perceived as a point of departure to a new woman.

The fact that she meets her husband in this controlled space implies that she may not make drastic changes in her life. When her former husband arrives, she remains seated implying that she is not as open to his arrival as she once was. Julia’s expression is serious and contemplative. It seems that, although she still has feelings for her husband as indicated by her urgency to be at home when he arrives, her lack of enthusiasm and bodily gestures implicate that their relationship has in fact changed, and will never be what it once was.

By citing Zuzana Pick, Chanan argues that “The visual economy of this short film ... which simply intercuts Julia in the present, performing everyday actions, with images of her past, is designed to emphasize privacy as the space in which interiority is given full expression.” As the character’s intense questioning of past and present plays itself in the darkened apartment, the film articulates “the courageous resolve of a divorce woman’ in “an affirmative image of retrospection and, despite its ambivalent ending, an empowering portrait of femininity” (Chanan qtd. in Pick 451-52).

We can see with this short that, although many years have passed since our first film analysis of *De Cierta Manera* in 1964, women continue to define themselves in relation to men, and dominant society does not provide them with many alternatives. Julia is financially independent and she appears to have a stable career, so in this sense the revolution is successful

in providing economic security to Julia, but the social structure of machismo does not appear to have progressed from the earlier years of the revolution. The result is that solely giving women economic stability by means of their employment is not enough to guarantee their justified insertion within the family structure.

Approximately a decade after *De Cierta Manera* (1964), it is apparent that there is a continuum within family values and power structures portrayed in Cuban film. Although Cuban women have gained far more civil rights, this does not automatically correspond to changes in family dynamics. We can also see there is a disconnect between the ideals of the revolution in terms of women's rights and the way these values are implemented on a day to day basis. This becomes apparent when we notice that Sara Gómez to date is the only female film director. This fact points towards a significant discrepancy between the revolutionary model, and the struggle for a true egalitarian society in both private and public spaces for Cuban women. At the same time, it is evident that this new narrative of the nation is still based on a heterosexual model that does not open the possibility for other forms of relationship.

CHAPTER 4: *GABRIELA AND A HORA DA ESTRELA* AND THE SPACE OF THE CITY

Many theorists have noted the way in which cinema has been deeply affected by the politics of its time. In the case of Brazil, certain themes which return predominantly in moments of severe political tension. Sheila Schwartzman, for example, notes *O Descobrimento do Brasil*, by Humberto Mauro released in 1937, as a film that achieved significant recognition in terms of establishing history as a definite recurring theme of Brazilian national cinema (165). During the period of the military dictatorship, for example, the scenario of historical events served frequently as an allegorical posture to criticize the injustices imposed by the military regime. Moreover, adaptations of celebrated Brazilian literary works have additionally been a constant as well. One reason to explain their predominance during these years is the censorship which would not allow the production and/or exhibition of any film assumed to criticize the dictatorship. The possibility of adapting classical literary works was a way of either criticism of the military regime through allegories or to guarantee investment from the government or companies interested in the “imagem mercadológica que a obra” could contribute to their image and also it could attract a public familiar with the author/work (Schwartzman 166). During the years of 1970-1980, for example, various short stories and drama of Nelson Rodrigues were adapted into *pornochanchadas* a very popular production with the public.

In terms of Brazilian cinematic production during and after the military dictatorship, Robert Stam and Randal Johnson affirm that:

In Brazil some of the liveliest moments of creativity and debate coincided, paradoxically, with the periods of the most intense repression. The cultural hegemony of the left, in terms of publication, filmmaking, and cultural production generally, was ironically

stronger during the dictatorship than it was later with redemocratization. The brutally repressive 1969-1974 period produced more provocative films than the subsequent period of liberalization ... the abertura period featured more conventional works such as the relatively “safe” literary adaptations of major Brazilian writers such as Jorge Amado and Nelson Rodrigues. (393)

Although released in the last years of the military regime, the film *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela* falls in this category. Based on the novel written by Jorge Amado with the same title, *Gabriela* was adapted into a film directed by Bruno Barreto in 1983. In 1985, Suzana Amaral adapted the novel *A Hora da Estrela* which was the last novel written by Clarice Lispector in 1977 who died that same year. Both authors have been nationally and internationally acclaimed by their work. Among other things, Amado’s work has focused on the regional color while Lispector’s intimate and feminist focus has been discussed by various scholars.

In this chapter, I discuss how *Gabriela* maintains a patriarchal paradigm while *A Hora da Estrela* is extremely insightful and progressive for its time in terms of gender roles and its portrayal of marginal immigrants in São Paulo, as well as pushing the limits thematically in form. I begin by contextualizing the film and the directors and then focus on the way the films explore the relationship between the construction of gender and space. I draw upon theoretical discussions by Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias to reflect on the interrelations between discourses on gender and the nation. I conclude by arguing that, although the films depict two female immigrants negotiating new spatial settings, the two characters could not be more different-Gabriela is the archetype of the sensuous Brazilian *morena*, while Macabéa is pale, clumsy and awkward. These differences tell us much about the project of the nation and the audience to which these films were aimed.

4.1 *Gabriela*: the Dynamic of Space in a Traditional Oligarchic Order

Born into a family closely connected with the Brazilian film industry, Barreto did not have difficulty emerging as a director. His parents were both well-known film producers, and he created his first film at the age of ten. By the time Barreto was eighteen, he had directed and co-written his first major full length feature film titled *Tatai A Garota* (1973). Barreto's next work was *Dona Flor and her Two Husbands* (1976), which was a success both nationally as well as internationally.²⁵ The film was based on a novel by Jorge Amado. In 1980, he directed *O Beijo no Asfalto* (1980), based on the play by Nelson Rodrigues. Barreto is one of the most commercially successful directors of Brazilian film. *Gabriela* was also a widely popular film but did not reach the level of acclaim that Barreto had first achieved with *Dona Flor*. Several years after the release of *Gabriela*, Barreto went on to Hollywood and successfully directed several North American productions. More recently, he has directed two Brazilian films. In an interview with Roberto D'Avila, Barreto notes the significant influence Nelson Pereira dos Santos has had on his work with his neo-realist films such as *Vidas Secas* (1963), *Rio 40 Graus* (1955) and *Boca de Ouro* (1962).

The novel *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela* was first adapted into a widely popular national telenovela starring the same actress as the film-Sonia Braga-in 1975, bringing the actress a level of popularity that had not existed prior to the series. Prior to the telenovela, Braga was recognized through her roles in several pornochanchadas such as *A Dama da Lotação* (1978) and *Bonitinha mas Ordinária* (1981) to mention a few. Her traits exhibit her sexuality as an

²⁵ Jorge Amado's novel was published in 1966.

ingredient which facilitated in the success of the *telenovela* as well as her films which will be discussed later in the chapter.

The film *Gabriela* set in 1925 revolves around the relationship of Gabriela (played by Sonia Braga), and Nacib by (Marcello Mastroianni). Nacib is a bar owner of Turkish and Italian decent, and Gabriela is a *morena* peasant who arrives in the town of Ilhéus in Bahia, after fleeing the droughts of the region for forty days. The film depicts a small northeastern community during a particular historical context, in which progress is ‘trying’ to arrive to Ilhéus but seems to have difficulty doing so. The other aspect which the film captures is the reality of the northeast in that the drought was a common event which frequently forced the poor communities of these areas to migrate to the nearest town in grave conditions seeking employment. The film depicts a time of transition from an oligarchic rural society to a more urban community but still marked by political struggle between landowners (*coronéis*) and a new political power connected to the beginnings of industrialization in Brazil. Although the story centers on the figures of Gabriela and Nacib, it brings many of the conflicts that were part of this transition. The story begins when Nacib hires Gabriela as a cook and the two begin a sexual affair. Nacib becomes jealous of the attention Gabriela receives when she comes to the bar to assist him, and he realizes that he would like to marry her. Gabriela is content with the relationship as it is, but agrees to the marriage. The nature of their relationship is thus altered upon their marriage as Gabriela is no longer permitted to dress and behave as she once did, and is more controlled by Nacib. Her clothing is less revealing and her hair is taught when in public. Their differences reach a critical point when Nacib denies Gabriela the opportunity to attend the circus and obliges her to attend a poetry reading instead. He later discovers her in his bed with another man, Tónico Bastos (Antonio Cantáfora). Nacib’s response to her behavior was to annul the wedding. To conclude, it appears

that the two cannot live without one another as Nacib remains single forever nostalgic of Gabriela, and Gabriela spy's on him until they reunite with a sexual encounter.

4.2 The Portrayal of Gender

The first images of Gabriela capture her covered in mud as she had just fled the drought plaguing northeast. Through the film, Gabriela continuously wears a revealing cotton sundress and she epitomizes the stereotypical sensuous Brazilian *morena*, with a slender yet curvy figure and long unruly black hair. Although the film is named after her character, Gabriela maintains minimal dialogue throughout the film. The majority of her scenes present her either without clothing with Nacib as a sexual object, or being objectified by the other men in the community as she attends clients as a waitress in Nacib's bar. Gabriela consistently demonstrates a submissive persona with men.²⁶ When spoken to, she bows her head down and is always dutiful and ready to serve, both as an employee and sexually. Gabriela is portrayed as the ideal *morena* that is part of the Brazilian imaginary, in this aspect; she cooks and cleans willingly, she is eager to please, and she is always available and enthusiastic to be dominated sexually.²⁷ The film dedicates quite a bit of time in developing the notion that Gabriela's persona is quite one-dimensional and is in many ways child like. Gabriela does not seem to have any female friends in the film other than a black woman who is employed by Nacib. The only acquaintances she possesses are other children.

²⁶ It is as if the entire town revolves around the sexual relations of the community and, in a sense, undermines their character. The men in Nacib's bar are only concerned with the town gossip pertaining to who is sleeping with whom.

²⁷ Although it is important to discuss the issue of race, this is not the scope of the present research and it will be part of a future research.

It is important to recognize the way the character of Gabriela and Sonia Braga are constructed in terms of the imaginary that Jorge Amado and the film construct of the nation. Through the film and the novel, Brazil is exported as a tropical paradise replenished with sensual, attractive, and sexually available women. This helps us to understand the international success of both the novel and the film. According to Francisca Carla Santos Ferrer, within both the film as well as the novel:

Gabriela apresenta um ‘modelo oficial’ da mulher brasileira (morena, sensual, livre...) que é construído e passa a ser incorporado pelo imaginário coletivo da sociedade. Assim, cabe ao historiador o desafio de apreender das ‘imagens todas as lições positivas ou negativas percorridas pela indústria cinematográfica, na elaboração de modelos e antimodelos.’ (146)

This is significant because it creates a clear connection between what is projected on screen with a collective imaginary as noted by Benedict Anderson and with the theories of Yuval Davis and Flora Anthias. The image of Gabriela and Sonia Braga, as a sensual *morena* whom is free sexually to more than one man, is appealing to a male viewer and constructs a particular identity of what constitutes an attractive Brazilian woman in terms of her behavior as well as her appearance. In fact, the Gabrielas that inhabit the male imaginary come from a long tradition that can be traced to Rita Baiana in *O Cortiço* (1890) by Aluísio de Azevedo and *Casa Grande e Senzala* (1933) by Gilberto Freyre. Furthermore, Gilberto Freyre’s famous motto’s “A white woman to marry, a mulatto to take to bed, a negress to do the work” further cements these patriarchal and xenophobic perspectives and the different categorization of women in the nation’s imaginary. What is interesting in this categorization is the different spaces that each

category (white, morena and black) occupies physically and symbolically in the map of the city and the narrative of the nation.

When the film does not focus on the sexual encounters of Gabriela, it presents other women (prostitutes) naked, such as Gloria who has an affair with a teacher despite her being the lover of one of the *coronéis* of the town. Gloria seems to be the most assertive woman in the film. she is very much aware of her possibilities in terms of the society – she can only have a comfortable life if she is the exclusive lover of one of the *coronéis*. This gives her a certain status in relation to the other prostitutes and she does not want to give it up for the teacher. Yet ironically, during the sequences Gloria remains completely naked while her lover is half dressed. Gloria like Gabriela is completely objectified pleasing the ‘gaze’ of the heterosexual male viewer. This ‘scopophilic gaze’ as theorized by Laura Mulvey objectifies Gloria and Gabriela regardless of their actions. The camera focuses on Gloria’s body and sensuality throughout the scene. The same can be said for Gabriela, as repeated takes throughout the film display the camera from a low angle and a dimly lit room, filming Gabriela while sleeping in provocative positions ready to be available sexually. It is this ‘gaze’ that makes this film so appealing to the male audience. Throughout the entire film Gabriela is objectified even when she is separated from Nacib, when the camera films her in a long take undressing into her more ‘earthy’ and more revealing clothes or frontal nudes. The camera functions within a voyeuristic filming technique maintaining the paradigm of the ‘male gaze.’

The music that Antônio Carlos Jobim created for the film is heard throughout the film and is played in its entirety at the end. The music in terms of an international audience reaffirms an innately Brazilian ethic, yet the lyrics affirm the theme of the film, Gabriela’s physical beauty along with her wonderful skills as a cook. These two values are again constructed as

characteristics to be valued as the most desirable combination for a Brazilian woman. The fragment of the lyrics also affirms a nationalistic identity by referring to the colors of the Brazilian flag.

Vim do norte vim de longe

De um lugar que já nem há

Vim dormindo pela estrada

Vim parar neste lugar

Meu cheiro é de cravo

Minha cor de canela

A minha bandeira

E verde e amarela

Pimenta de cheiro

Cebola em rodela

Um beijo na boca

Feijão na panela

Gabriela

Sempre Gabriela

This song dialogues with a long tradition that connects the figure of the mulata to food.

According to Affonso Romano de Sant'Anna, this tradition goes back to the romantic period when there was a very clear division between the white and untouched women from the elite (those designated to marry) and the more accessible mulata.

Another limitation of the film is the minimal character development, and the vast majority of the relationships gyrate around sexual encounters and women's subservience to men. Again, as we saw in *Mujer Transparente* and in *Retrato de Teresa*, Gabriela and the other women in the film are defined in relation to how they are desired or relate to men. Another issue observed in the film is the mention of 'modernity' arriving to the town especially with the scene of the inauguration of the town's newly constructed port, however in general terms their lives are quite shallow. The film attempts to reproduce much of the power relations which were prevalent in small communities controlled by the *coronéis* in northeastern Brazil. The *coronéis* were the figures of power within the community who often abused their power to the detriment of many. Questions of poverty, unemployment and abuses of power by the coronels are ignored for the most part. Nacib is hard working, but his quotidian concerns in life are superficial, analogous to his relationships with every other character in the film.

Gabriela appears to have been made keeping in mind a national as well as international audience. The film projects the quintessential stereotypical image of Brazil. The town of Ilhéus, where the film is based, appears to be a tropical paradise. Although the homes are quaint and not luxurious, the town is clean, and the houses are painted with bright tropical colors. Many still wide angle-shots are taken during the opening scenes of the film as well as during the closing stages of the film creating a beautiful backdrop which captures the ocean, with the town at its edge enmeshed by tropical rainforests. In this sense, we can say that the film attempts to allude to the image of Paradise that has been associated to Brazil since the letter of Pero Vaz de Caminha, when he writes about the discovery of Brazil to the Portuguese King. As Marilena Chauí rightly argues, this image has been continually reproduced in different discourses that

reinforce the mythical origins of the country, constituted in the idealized vision of the natural environment and an affable population (58).

4.3 Space in *Gabriela*

Focusing on the spatial arrangements within the film is interesting because it allows us to comprehend the way spaces are socially produced and how they shape the individual's subjectivity in urban geographies. In other words, the way the film represents space has profound implications on the way individual interpret the world and his/her insertion in it. Gabriela, in this sense, is a quite interesting film since the city is divided into hierarchal and exclusionary spaces, which reaffirm the relations of power within this society. The domestic realm, in and around the kitchen, is the designated space for where Gabriela is to complete her duties as a cook for the household while Nacib's bar is a sort of exclusive area only acceptable to white upper class men.

To illustrate the way issues of gender and class are essential to the landscape of the city, we can focus on the spaces in which Gabriela consistently inhabits; her bedroom, Nacib's bar, the kitchen, or playing outside with children. There are several long sequences which present Gabriela playing games with children. She is furthermore completely uninhibited and unfazed by the fact that she is the only adult playing with a group of children in clothing that is revealing and not appropriate for the nature of the activities in which she is involved. Another sequence which captures this behavior is when the circus comes into town, and Gabriela who was at first standing in the sidelines, runs into the circus group marching through the town unable to restrain herself. These different spaces which she circulates contribute to her perception as domestic and obtuse. They also further contribute to her marginalized status, because she remains isolated for

the most part from the rest of society in enclosed environments or with children who are not capable of having an awareness of their surroundings to be critical of it.

Nacib unlike Gabriela is portrayed wearing his clothing during the lovemaking scenes. It is quite clear that the one being objectified by the camera is Gabriela and not Nacib. Nacib is dressed elegantly and much of the film captures the dialogue between himself and the other men whom are patrons at his bar. Nacib is amiable and hardworking presenting the image of a dutiful man who enjoys having a desirable woman waiting for him at home. However, he is also clearly insecure by being content with a woman whom will not challenge him intellectually, and who he wishes to be confined by the home in giving himself a sense of entitlement and possession of Gabriela. His role is further enhanced by Barreto's choice of Marcelo Mastroianni for the portrayal of Nacib. Mastroianni was known in cinema as the image of the Italian lover.

Although the film is titled *Gabriela*, and Sonia Braga is believed to portray the protagonist, her supposed beauty and sensuality which never seems to be satisfied, speak more than any words could and they obscure her character. The outcome of this is that Gabriela remains 'child like' to the pleasure of the men around her. She is forever naïve and subservient unaware of an alternative existence, until she begins to age and falls to the periphery of the male's vision of the ideal woman and is no longer attractive (which would never appear in the film because it is outside the paradigm of female beauty).

During the transformation of Gabriela from employee to wife, she appears awkward and uncomfortable in her new role, but as an obedient wife she never complains. A critical scene portraying the nature of their relationship occurs when they are in the movie theater together. Again in a very 'child like' behavior, the primary action taken by Gabriela in the movie theater is

to remove her shoes. Gabriela breaks the codes of a more refined space of society. Certain codes within society must be followed if you are to be accepted, and Gabriela does not fit within these parameters. In a certain way, the film seems to point to the impossibility of change of status for those who do not know the codes, pointing towards a very authoritarian society offering few alternatives.

Another alternative space within the film can be seen with the circus. The participation in the circus is typically associated with impoverished sectors of the population where social codes are more flexible and less rigid than the rest of society. This is a space that Gabriela can identify with. Gabriela as seen throughout the film seems to only feel comfortable in places where she can perform the activities that are expected of her. This can be seen throughout all of the spaces she occupies. In the kitchen, she performs her duties as the house cook, she ascribes to the role of waitress in the bar, and in the bedroom she declares to Nacib she is always ready to perform for him. In the circus and with the children with whom she plays with. Gabriela can relate to individuals from her class outside of the 'correct' spaces within society. It is in this space where she can truly feel free. According to Mikhail Bakhtin, the carnival is a space marked by the presence of an obscene and licentious language in which the hierarchies are suspended. Gabriela in this situation does not understand the societal codes that are elements of the social structure. She can neither comprehend when these are temporarily suspended as presented within the circus. In the circus she can employ her child like behavior and find acceptance.

Gabriela is repeatedly either filmed in the bedroom, or in Nacib's bar, or in the kitchen. We can see, that Gabriela is in fact trapped spatially as noted by K. Nelson. She cannot roam the city freely as she chooses and if she does, as Elizabeth Wilson notes, she transgresses and becomes the temptress or the prostitute. Additionally, by remaining within the home, Gabriela in

a sense remains invisible. Her needs become transparent to dominant society as she remains hidden behind closed doors. Gabriela is not part of the landscape which is commonly visible, and if she is, it is within an ascribed role or location based on the wishes of Nacib (or other men) who performs his proper role. Gabriela is clearly limited and constrained by these domains, and when she chooses to leave these spaces, she usually has to ask Nacib for permission as demonstrated when she inquires whether she can attend a movie. Yet again she is portrayed as a child who does not have the autonomy to decide when she is going to arrive at work or leave to see a film. Nacib, on the other hand, is seen in several takes roaming the town freely at all hours.

It is important to note that politically, the film captures the period of *coronelismo* where the coronel is the figure of power in the community, who is actually deceived by Gloria by having a lover. Francisca Carla Santos Ferrer notes the important contribution that film has made in terms of its portrayal of the northeaster Brazilian reality, which depicts the relations of power that were part of the oligarchic society in Bahia. Nonetheless, she fails to have a critical view towards the way the film constructs the entire community, whose sole focus is on the sexual encounters and power relations among its population. Furthermore, she fails to question the lack of character development of Gabriela and her objectification in almost every scene of the film . It is important to note that within this time period and in this community existed the space of the brothel. The women employed here were usually contained inside this space, and kept away from the families whose husbands requested their services. This space that could be potentially perceived as a more democratic space, soon we realize that the hierarchies are still present since the coronels have privileges in terms of their choices of women. The brothels are always on the fringes of the community in spaces where the more proper family women would not need to

walk by. Therefore, women's spaces within the city are very clearly demarcated, while men have access to all spaces within the city moving freely, exhibiting their superiority.

Another scene that also captures the values of women in the community is apparent when Gloria, peering through a window from within her home, chats with a teacher walking by. It is not a coincidence that she is inside the home while the teacher is situated to the exterior of the home. Gloria is actually imprisoned in the house by her lover - the coronel. By imprisoning her there, he is thus controlling her and also affirming his physical possession of her. Having possession of her shows his power and gives him status. So in this case, the house is a space of oppression. Even though, as the critics usually show, there are always possibilities of resistance. In this case, it is when she chooses to date the teacher as another lover. However, this case points to different spaces of circulation (or a lack thereof) to prostitutes – the prostitutes that stay in the brothel and are available to all and those who are for private use.

This display reinforces the notion throughout the film that women are to remain inside the home while men, like Nacib and the coronéis, are free to travel in the city. It is important to note that Gloria, dressed in very revealing clothing, lures the teacher into her home to chat. A telling line is when she states there is nothing she loves more in the world than the attention of men. This confirms a significant underlying theme to the film. The roles that young women 'perform' in society and their significance stems from the quantity of sexual advances from men based solely on their physical attributes. We should also not forget that the family women are frequently complaining about the presence of the prostitutes as they circulate in very specific spaces – the house, the theater or in the streets accompanied by someone of the family.

It is clear that *Gabriela* critically mirrors the gender and class dynamics that were components of this oligarchic society, which still remains within sectors of many cities. In this sense, the cartography of the city helps us understand the way values and codes are inscribed in the city and its inhabitants. The imaginary of the nation which is constructed within *Gabriela* is thus very conservative and authoritarian, where women are restricted to the traditional roles as discussed by Yuval-Davis and Anthias. The only woman who attempted to break this structure, Malvina, is punished and cannot continue living in the city. Therefore the idea of modernity brought by the construction of the port, as the final scene in which the *coronéis* salute each other, points to the persistence of the structures of power, and therefore, the status quo. It is clear that *Gabriela*, when compared to the other films of this analysis, is the least progressive in terms of its portrayal of women and their contention of space. It is important to remember that the film was created shortly in the last years of the military dictatorship at a time when pornochanchadas were very popular and it was encouraged by the government. It was furthermore a time period when women's movements were beginning to gain strength and shortly thereafter there was more diversity in terms of female and black directors in Brazilian film.

Gabriela is not the only film of Bruno Barreto which has objectified women, and this tendency is also apparent in his film *O Beijo no Asfalto* released in 1981 (although the film does present queer issues based on Nelson Rodrigues's play). In an interview done close to the proximity of his release of the film *Bossa Nova* in 2001, when asked about women and gender roles in films, it was interesting to note that Barreto felt that Brazil and international cinema were more advanced in terms of female protagonists than the United States:

No cinema americano, não, porque o cinema americano é um cinema muito machista, os papéis masculinos são sempre muito melhores que os papéis femininos. Toda época do

Oscar, e agora eu e a Amy (his former American wife who was married to Steven Spielberg) somos membros da Academia, é muito difícil você escolher cinco grandes papéis femininos, porque não existem no cinema americano. Mas acho que isso vai mudar ou isso já está mudando. No cinema europeu e no restante do cinema mundial, não, os papéis femininos sempre foram... (qt. D'Avila 124)

In many ways, *Gabriela* reproduces many of the stereotypes without attempting to challenge them. Much to the contrary, by opting for Sonia Braga and Mastroianni as protagonists, the film seems to reinforce these stereotypes. It is also important to note that the adaptation of a novel does not necessarily need to be faithful to the original text since by translating it to a new media (cinema) and historical context, subsequently the director can interfere and create his/her own reading of the original text. But that was not the case with *Gabriela*.

4.4 *A Hora da Estrela* and the Marginal Spaces of São Paulo:

A Hora da Estrela (1985) was Suzana Amaral's first full length feature film. The film was based on the last novel written by Clarice Lispector (of the same title published in 1977). Lispector, like Amado, was a well respected Brazilian novelist. The film was well received both nationally and internationally and was nominated as Brazil's bid for best foreign language film for an academy award in 1985. The film won the Coral Award at the *Havana Film Festival* in 1986. At the *Brasília Festival of Brazilian Cinema* in 1985, the film received awards for best picture, best director, actress, cinematography and editing. At the *Berlin Film Festival*, it won the award for best actress in 1986.

Suzana Amaral, unlike Bruno Barreto, arrived to filmmaking later in life. During the earlier period of her life, she was the mother of nine children and the wife of a physician in a rural community in northeastern Brazil. During the 1960's, the family decided to relocate to São Paulo. Amaral's family in São Paulo was well known as artists and intellectuals within the city. Always having been interested in film, Amaral enrolled in film school at this time and thereafter began employment with a local television station. During this period, she was focused on reporting and then progressed into documentary production for the station that employed her. In 1976, Amaral decided to pursue feature film production and attended film school at New York University. It was at this time that Amaral decided to create a film based on the novel written by Clarice Lispector, shortly after Lispector had passed away. Amaral spent several years saving money for the film and was able to begin production when Embrafilme advanced 70% of the film's working budget. The other 30% was provided by private lenders. Amaral directed the film on a low budget of 150,000 with shooting lasting only four weeks. Ultimately the film would gross 1 million prior to being released internationally (Rothstein 2).

The actress Marcelia Cartaxo, a relative unknown who plays Macabéa, the protagonist of the film. Amaral searched specifically for an actress from the northeast and first observed Marcelina in São Paulo in a venue where small regional theatre groups would often perform. Amaral has noted in interviews that she specifically looked for an unknown actress as the protagonist, surrounded by acclaimed actors. It seems that this would result in a deeper connection of the audience with Macabéa having never seen her in any other role. As Amaral states in an interview:

Macabéa seemed to me – and still does - to be a big metaphor of my country. She's an antiheroine. What's a hero? A hero dramatically speaking is the one who acts. Macabéa

does not act; she's an anti hero, she is acted upon, she waits for all those people to act upon her, and she reacts. I always said to myself I would like to make up a story about a character who would symbolize the Brazilian people, and Brazilians are sort of antiheroes. [...] In Brazil, people do not act, they only react. (Rothstein 2)

This citation highlights how many Brazilians historically have been victims of a hierarchical government and society. Many people have accepted a system which offers few opportunities and continually exploits working class populations. Macabéa is the antihero because she represents all of the injustices of a society that never stopped to really look at Macabéa and provide her with an opportunity. With the history of the military dictatorship, it is possible that there are still memories and scars of the repercussions that came from speaking against the government. But this story of exploitation goes far back as the film *Gabriela* already unveils. Although there is a stable democracy in Brazil, neoliberal economic policies affect working class populations the most. Macabéa articulates this struggle for Brazilians who like Amaral states are 'acted upon.'

A Hora da Estrela portrays the lower socio-economic classes in Brazil. Suzana Amaral had lived for the most part a comfortable life having had cooks and housekeepers who assisted her while raising her children. Amaral having lived in New York and being interviewed by an American for the book *Eye on the World* states:

When Americans see the film they have to think about a totally different reality. It's very difficult for low-class people in Brazil to move into another class. The chances are that ninety-percent will stay in a low class for the rest of their lives, no matter how hard they

struggle, they're not going to make it. It's absolutely closed. It's not like that in this country. (Stone 40)

Amaral is discussing the large gap in Brazil and most of Latin America between the upper echelons of society and the lower classes. She seems to affirm that in the United States the 'American dream' is for many an attainable reality, where the ethic of 'if you pull yourself up by your boot straps you will make it' mentality, which in the case of Brazil she seems to emphasize is not the case. Although the socio-economic reality in Brazil is significantly different than that of the United States, I would be cautious to adapt such a perspective.²⁸

Amaral portrays the life of Macabéa a *retirante* (an immigrant from the northeast) who has recently relocated to São Paulo after the death of her aunt. She is a nineteen year old orphan who was raised by her aunt. Macabéa shares a large room with several women in a building within the city. Her living quarters are minimal and the living conditions are meager and impoverished as the main room contains a broken window, filthy mirrors and a sink stained from overuse. Macabéa is employed as a typist and it is immediately clear that her typing skills have much to be desired. Macabéa has a coworker Gloria, who is her antithesis. Gloria is obsessed with attention from men and is self interested and very deceitful both to her employer as well as Macabéa. Towards the beginning of the film, Macabéa meets Olímpico who like herself is also a *retirante* and an orphan. Olímpico and Macabéa become involved in a relationship, although, unlike in *Gabriela*, it is not based on physical intimacy rather they frequently spend time together in the park.

²⁸ One film that highlights this clearly is *El Norte* (1983) directed by Gregory Nava.

Macabéa is repeatedly abused and mistreated throughout the film; nonetheless she maintains an innocent exuberance of life as she questions the smallest details of quotidian life nonexistent to the average working person. Tragically, Macabéa's life seems to spin out of control when Olímpico declares his love for another woman (Gloria), and finds Macabéa to be "a hair in his soup." Simultaneously, Macabéa is soon to be terminated from her job as a typist. Her co-worker Gloria deceives her and has an affair with Olímpico solely due to the advice of a fortune teller who declares the only way she will be married and find the man of her dreams, is to betray a friend by taking away her love interest. The film ends miserably as Macabéa is struck by the car of a handsome and wealthy American young man. The same young man whom Gloria's fortune teller told Macabéa would fall in love with and live happily ever after.

A Hora da Estrela defies Hollywood and mainstream cinema in every way possible, making it an innovative, insightful and highly creative film on many levels. Macabéa is far cry from the archetypal female actress and is the complete paradox of Gabriela as she is an awkward young woman on many levels. Macabéa is repeatedly referred to as "ugly," moreover even her name causes people to cringe. Her skin shows many imperfections, she does not wear make-up and she is frequently disheveled. Although she is nineteen years of age and economically independent, she is dressed in many articles of clothing which are not appropriate for an adult such as pink barretts and clothing which allude towards her innocence. From the first sequence of the film, it is clear that Macabéa, likely as a consequence of her life as an orphan, does not have the interpersonal or life/social skills of a typical woman of her age. In addition to this, it is easily apparent that she has received an inadequate education. The film frequently portrays her "unrefined" behavior as she is frequently filmed eating while typing or while urinating.

Olímpico much like Gloria is quite different from Macabéa even though he is a “retirante,” of an impoverished socio-economic class, and is uneducated similar to Macabéa. Although Olímpico is quite charming at first, he is frequently very critical and often cruel to Macabéa regarding her questions and aspirations in life. He works at a steel plant in poor conditions. Olímpico maintains a very domineering personality and, although he is uneducated, he is quite arrogant in terms of how he relates to Macabéa. Even the other women who share the room where she lives find her peculiar due to her modest behavior. Macabéa does not socialize much with them, and the only instance where she appears to be truly happy is when she has the room just for herself. There is when she dreams of getting married as if any other girl her age would.

4.5 The Portrayal of Gender Roles

Macabéa is contrary to the typical female protagonist. She is portrayed as unsanitary, and dresses in a very awkward manner in many ways childlike. However, all though Macabéa may not fill the stereotypical female role, she longs to be accepted and seeks the attention of men. Yet she does so through her smile, or conversation as seen with Olímpico. Her colleague Gloria is the exact opposite of Macabéa, in this sense that she dresses in a very revealing manner and she openly discusses her sexual activity with many men (as well as her many abortions). Yet Gloria like the protagonist Julia in *Mujer Transparente* (who at one point) ultimately seeks to attain marriage as her goal. She comments on how men use her sexually, and then they disappear. Gloria’s affirmations confirm that she too like Julia is not complete without a man in marriage. She incessantly strives for the attention of as many men as possible, but unlike Gabriela her

ultimate goal is to marry a proper man which she seems to achieve when she begins dating someone (Olímpico) at the *expense* of Macabéa.

In several scenes, Macabéa, who despite being different, romanticizes a Cinderella wedding. The first depiction of this is apparent when Macabéa stays home from work and is seen dancing in her room with a white blanket. The closing scenes of this sequence display her holding her blanket as if it were a veil, and the music in the background affirms this connotation. Another interpretation of the scene which confirms this as one of the only sequences throughout the film where Macabéa is genuinely happy, much like the scene of Teresa dancing with her son:

Ultimately the waltz ‘tells’ us that despite her poverty and artless moves Macabéa has idealistic yearnings and a kind of grace. Hers is not the physical grace we associate with a skilled dancer, but it is nevertheless a human desire expressed through music; it contrasts with her dreary surrounding and gives a certain poignancy to her momentary abandon. The scene is particularly powerful within the context of the film as a whole, because it stands out as one of Macabéa’s few happy, carefree moments in a life otherwise filled with disappointment, struggle and poverty. (Sadlier 155)

Another scene presents Macabéa admiring a wedding dress and imitating the hand positions and gestures of a mannequin. Macabéa throughout the film seems to imitate the proper appearance and behavior of a young woman lacking any real guidance from a parent or family member. All of these sequences point to the fact that Macabéa learns (at a later age) that she must ‘perform’ her gender. Within the societal constraints and compulsive heterosexuality Macabéa must wear lipstick and paint her nails, but she does so awkwardly, not precisely knowing how to apply the lipstick.

The closing sequences show Macabéa enthusiastically purchasing a dress as she thinks she will encounter her American soon to be husband. On many levels the promise of the fortune teller is completely unrealistic, as is the manner in which Macabéa is financially capable of purchasing such an extravagant yet innocent and proper (much like Macabéa) dress, as she is poor and is soon to be terminated by her employer. As Macabéa leaves the store, for the first time through the film, she is presented as a beautiful young woman. Her hair is no longer constrained by barrets as it is loose and flowing, she is wearing some (but not extravagant) makeup as she is running in slow motion to meet her future husband. Here we have the Cinderella fairytale ending that girls from an early age are taught. Macabéa will be rescued from her impoverished life, her cruel surroundings of friends and coworkers who abuse of her innocence. This harsh reality will disappear with the arrival of a handsome and wealthy man to accept her and protect her. Yet Suzana Amaral presents this as a fallacy. With this ending of the film, there is criticism towards the lack of opportunities for people like her. This kind of a society leaves no space for Macabéas who will be marginalized and be alienated/invisible from the landscape of the city. In this sense, we can say that, unlike the other characters of the previous film who were “invited” to compose the landscape of the city, Macabéa is completely invisible since she does not fulfill the role expected from her.

4.6 Space in *A Hora da Estrela*

The uniqueness and social marginalization of Macabéa, however, is not restricted to her behavior but it is also exposed by the spaces she inhabits. The spaces that occur the most frequently throughout the film are the room where Macabéa sleeps with several other women,

the office where she is employed, the park, and the poor and decayed outskirts of the city of São Paulo as a whole. Whenever Macabéa is filmed within her home or at work, her marginal socio-economic status is clearly marked by the spaces which she occupies. The film opens with Macabéa in a dimly lit room filled with boxes. Macabéa is not employed in an office which would be the normal space designated for a typist, she is in a sort of warehouse room with little space or light and which is filled with boxes. The primary frame of the film focuses on a cat eating food from the floor marking the uncleanness of the room. There are also scenes with Macabéa eating while she types. Her work conditions parallel her home situation as well. Before she is fired, there is another take of the same cat from the first sequence eating from the floor. These subtleties point towards the continual decay of the office until she is no longer there. Macabéa cannot afford to live in an apartment alone therefore she shares her bedroom with other women whom all use the room to sleep, eat and dress themselves. The camera goes to great lengths to demonstrate the precarious condition of the shared room. In several takes, the camera pans the room and zooms in on areas which are particularly problematic, such as one take which focuses on a broken window with a fly slowly moving across the glass. Other images capture the rusted walls of the building. An image which epitomizes their marginalized status is when all of the women gather at the window to watch the television of their neighbor who happens to have the shade up.

The house where they live appears to be located in an underprivileged neighborhood lacking any attractive qualities. This seems to imply the marginal position of these women within the city of São Paulo. As we know, São Paulo is the most industrialized city in Brazil and one of the largest in the southern hemisphere. In the 1970's the city attracted many *retirantes* like Macabéa and Olímpico who dreamed of having a better life in the big city. Most of them ended

up living in impoverished neighborhoods and work at or below minimum wage. The *retirantes* are also usually perceived as the opposite to the process of modernization that São Paulo is proud of, leaving the city stigmatized due to the presence of these segments.²⁹

Many sequences in the film transpire in a park. This is where Macabéa seems to pass most of her time when not at home or at work. Due to the fact that Macabéa is a *retirante*, perhaps she feels most comfortable in a setting that is more comforting than the rigid structures of the city. Furthermore, within these marginalized sectors of the park which Macabéa and Olímpico inhabit, there is evidence of other marginalized groups like themselves within the fringes of the park. On the other hand, Macabéa is also fascinated by the city, and makes observations that only a foreigner would make about riding the metro on Sundays. She rides the metro because it is completely unknown to her, yet exciting. Macabéa visits neighborhoods where the ‘touristic attraction’ is the overpass above the train line, rather than the more elegant or famous provinces of the city. She is constantly restricted to the poor and decadent neighborhoods of the city.

Therefore, we can say that the city is a critical backdrop to the film with repeated scenes which capture her and Olímpico traversing the city, yet they are often in the fringes of the urban environment. One sequence has them eating lunch underneath a train overpass in an industrial area, devoid of any other people. Along these lines, Katia Macel states “Suzana Amaral sempre põe o casal em espaços públicos e vazios. Parques, praças e jardins, por onde caminham através de conversas inanimadas. O coletivo, o público, o povo, está *ausente* ele não parece como representação ou invenção. Os cine-personagens encontram-se fora da história e do

²⁹ According to Lucia Maria Machado Bogus and Suzana Pasternak, 73% of the population migrating to São Paulo in 1980 originated from the northeastern states. Most of them would occupy the lower levels of employment and live in poor neighborhoods.

acontecimento” (129). This is an interesting point because the emptiness further isolates Macabéa and Olímpico and juxtapositions them against an urban metropolis to which they fall victim to.

The contrast between the São Paulo lived by Macabéa and the metropolis acclaimed by its modernity (cosmopolitanism) is clear when we remember that in the 1980’s the city of São Paulo was a goal of new politics of occupation which sought to modernize the city, placing it within the international circuit. According to David Harvey, these transformations mark a change for a manner of direction characterized entrepreneurship. This represents the adoption of politics marked by the ties between the interests of the state and diverse agents of capital which are guided by logic valued by space. These joint measures manipulate investments within commercial sectors such as shopping centers and dwellings of translation and prestige of contracted services creating a differential consumption of space. To insert the city within this network of global flux, it is necessary to separate these spaces within the interplay of competition with other cities (*The condition* 295-96).

However, as various scholars remind us, this dynamic always result in economic, social and political inequality as the film seems to point to. To illustrate this, we can refer to another sequence that captures Macabéa as she peers through a gated fence at the train below. Here, symbolically, she and Olímpico are trapped in their marginalized status as she views the trains below. This technique echoes the closing scene of Mario in *De Certa Manera* peering through a gated fence as he looks towards Yolanda. Yet Macabéa and Olímpico are constrained by existing on the fringes of a capitalist system and their status as *retirantes* while Mario is constrained by his tendency to revert to his old “anti-revolutionary” ways.

The spaces that Macabéa and Olímpico occupy directly correlate to their marginalized status within society. Both of the characters earn minimum wage and are living at poverty level, (yet they have homes, they are not in the *favelas*). Nevertheless, almost all of the spaces they occupy are marked with ugliness. Olímpico's steel factory is grey and dingy; Macabéa's home is overcrowded and filthy as her 'office' is with stray cats and dusty boxes. The men whom are the managerial staff have desks and separate offices, yet Macabéa and Gloria are with the boxes.

As discussed previously, the concluding scene of the film denies the viewer the Hollywood ending of Macabéa who survived hostility and adversity to live happily ever after with her handsome and wealthy husband. Amaral strategically subverts the dominant paradigm of the 'happy ending' and of the 'Cinderella rescued by her prince' by having her struck by the wealthy German's Mercedes Bens. The climax of the film is a take where the camera is held from above in a wide angle shot of Macabéa lifeless on the road, yet curled in an innocent and child like position capturing the very essence of Macabéa in a sense. The film clearly establishes that there is no room for Macabéa in the Brazilian world of São Paulo, and makes a potent critique of the urban environment representing a capitalist system which has oppressed her (and so many similar to her) and has left her with few options to escape her impoverished socio-economic status.

Macabéa was marginalized in every extent possible. She was without a family and alone in the world, and was without any kind of support network. Macabéa, although inquisitive, was without an education further limiting the possibility of her ascent into another socio-economic class. She is also representative of the *retirante* migrant populations who come from the north and must readjust to life within an urban center. Due to her innocence, she is very trustworthy and is mistreated by every individual who surrounds her either at home or at work. Consequently

Macabéa like much of the marginalized Brazilian population (who is forced to immigrate to urban centers to escape poverty) is caught within a vicious circle that seems to be impossible to escape. The spaces which Macabéa must negotiate reinforce the hostility that she is facing as a woman, and as an immigrant without education. The film does not present a single person who genuinely cares for Macabéa. It is also very significant that Macabéa is killed in an open public space within the city. Throughout the film, she fairly traverses these modern spaces which represent a country that is technologically advanced and modern. However all of these spaces are unknown to Macabéa. In the name of progress and development, the Macabéas of the world are forgotten and lost in the name of modernization where we can historically see a societal elite which controls all of the nation's resources.

An interesting comment made by Darlene J. Saldier can be connected with the discussion of David Harvey and Nancy Harstock, when Saldier notes that Macabéa now living in an urban metropolis is integrated into a capitalist system which ultimately alienates Macabéa. She is alienated as a result of her lack of education and low socio-economic status, yet she is also abused by this system as she is working below minimum wage and is too 'ignorant' to notice. Macabéa is clearly attracted to capitalism by affirming she likes coca-cola the quintessential multinational corporation which Amaral seems to be hinting towards, yet her untimely death affirms that Macabéa is also not only the victim of a patriarchal system but a capitalist one as well:

In effect, the capitalist dream factory is the means by which the ideology of capitalism is reproduced and sustained. The close-up shot of the radio and the bottle of coca-cola are metonymic images, representative of the entire sign system that Macabéa encounters when she comes to the city and is drawn into the system of labor and consumption that

transforms people into things. Even her roommates, who own very little, note her lack of material goods. Macabéa hopes to correct that lack and says with conviction ‘Tenho emprego e vou comprar coisas.’ (165)

The implication then is that Macabéa will accumulate goods within a capitalist system thus requiring her to work more in order to amass more goods. The fact that Macabéa has purchased a new dress prior to her death implies indirectly this mode of thought is not sustainable.

The film poster features Macabéa smiling with a large flower, capturing the day she met Olímpico when he was being photographed. As noted earlier, the flower is representative of Macabéa who is innocent yet delicate and easily influenced and manipulated, yet she remains curious and attempts to improve her condition. She has not acquired the jaded harshness of a city dweller and appreciates the simplest things in life such as a flower. A flower which Macabéa took to work and placed in a small glass of water only to be taken by Gloria as an accessory on one of her many dates. When discussing the symbolism of the flower, Katia Maciel notes:

As metamorfoses acontecem de forma mimética no filme. Macabéa parece assumir a forma das pétalas abertas ao sorrir com a flor na mão para Olímpico, parece o gato, lenta diante da máquina de escrever, parece estrela diante da visão da cartomante em sua imagem invertida na bola de cristal. Não há redundância de sentidos através de uma estrutura metafórica em que uma imagem acontece vinculada ao significado de outra, mas sim sucessão de metamorfoses em que uma imagem se desdobra, por contigüidade, em outra. A flor não aparece no lugar de Macabéa, é a flor que é Macabéa e Macabéa é a flor. (123)

The two different films have opposing projects in terms of their projections of Brazil, women and discourses of space. While Gabriela reinforces some of the elements which are aspects of the Brazilian foundational myth, *A Hora da Estrela* attempts to construct a more critical view of Brazilian society. In *Gabriela*, we can see Brazil constructed as an exotic paradise, filled with tropical flair and sensuous *morena* women. Furthermore, the film presents a hierarchical system relegating everyone to their proper and acceptable 'places.' We cannot forget that in the 1920's, Brazil was going through a transitional process which makes even more imperative the demarcation of hierarchical spaces within the city and the nation. In *A Hora da Estrela*, we can observe that the film attempts to deconstruct many of the images and notions created in *Gabriela*. This film presents an inhospitable urban environment ridden in decay and hostility. Macabéa is far from exotic and sensuous thus dispelling the notion that all Brazilian women must aspire to be Gabrielas. In a sense, we can say that films as *A Hora da Estrela* present a more multilayered social structure in which individuals are affected by different forms of oppression. As Chandra Mohanty and Caren Kaplan rightly argue, in our attempt to challenge the structures responsible for the different levels of inequality and oppression, we cannot create other categories through which we reinforce the same or even different forms of sexism and racism. When we compare the two films and the way the directors attempt to relate space and gender/class, it is easy to understand why *A Hora da Estrela* was acclaimed as a key text in the process of deterritorialization of concepts such as nation, modernity, gender, and sexuality to cite just a few .

CONCLUSION

Though outside the scope of this study, as I finish my dissertation, a new film has just been released by the Brazilian director Sandra Werneck that attempts to re-visit the way shantytowns are usually portrayed in films such as *Black Orpheus* (1959 directed by Marcel Camus) and *Cidade de Deus* (2002 directed by Fernando Meirelles). In contrast Werneck focuses on the experience of three young women who live in a shantytown. The film interconnects the daily life of these three young women to a reality marked by diverse forms of violence that limit their access to their own basic human rights. This demonstrates, that the process we begin tracing here is still a concern, since much still needs to be done in order to guarantee citizenship that provides equal access to the city. Once again, the interconnection between gender and space prove an interesting tool to analyze the dynamics responsible for the way society is structured in Brazil. The same remains true of the Cuban society.

As I demonstrated with my examination of the films, Feminist Geography can be used as a tool to consider how women intersect with the landscape and they dialogue with the city. It can also help discuss the dynamics within the household, and on a broader level how gender intersects with the nation and how important women function as actors in carrying out state policy. In spite of the importance of feminist geography to elucidate the gendered understanding of urban space, we were able to see how historically, cultural geography has ignored feminist scholarship until the early seventies, and more notably in the eighties. With the work of Linda McDowell, we saw how essential it was to incorporate women's issues into geographic analysis and to include women's labors not only in the workplace but also within the home in statistical and quantitative analysis. Gillian Rose, on the other hand, discusses the importance in carefully

analyzing landscape in order to understand what a particular society finds valuable and significant. Rose spoke of meaning in societal codes and how these codes ascribe what a society finds to be significant. Rose also analyzed how these codes have the function to ascribe certain roles depending on what is determined to be meaningful or not. As discussed by Rose, it is crucial to keep in mind that the symbols and codes employed by the landscape represent the power structures of dominant society.

In the movies, I discussed how in *Gabriela* the acceptable code of the city was for prostitutes to remain in the brothel behind closed doors in the fringes of the city while ‘proper’ women were to remain within the home tending to household duties. I also argued that the men of the community like Nacib and the patrons of his bar in a sense had a free reign of the city as they walked freely throughout the community at all hours. Within *A Hora da Estrela*, I demonstrated how Macabéa and Olímpico followed the codes of the city in that as marginalized *retirantes* of São Paulo, their socio-economic status was constantly reflected by and reinforced by their physical presence in a landscape that is on the periphery and in decline. Scene after scene displayed abandoned parks and obscure alleyways, or the oppressive office and building which Macabéa frequently occupied. As I pointed out, the advances of a ‘modern’ and ‘developed society were clearly outside of Macabéas reach as she could only observe the train, and rush past the cars, but she was removed from any position of power at all times. These scenes also called ideas of Nancy Harstock and her analysis of primitive accumulation. I maintained how primitive accumulation was affected by gender as several women presented in the film lived at the margins of a capitalist system. This capitalist system systematically marginalized in that they were not functioning on the same terms as men. For instance, we observed how Macabéa and Gloria, who did not have occupations of significant importance

while their male supervisors operated on different terms with offices in a separate wing consisting of more professional accommodations.

In *De Cierta Manera*, the landscape played a very important role in symbolizing meaning for the Cuban Revolutionary government. The destruction of the buildings in the Las Yaguas slums was the systematic restructuring of the revolutionary regime. The film visually depicted the transformation of a community by erecting architectural symbols of progress and stability and eradicating poverty. Although the film attempts to construct a new foundational myth, it falls short by presenting an overassertive revolutionary agenda.

On a spatially smaller scale, I analyzed the significance in the dynamics within the household particularly with the work of Ann M. Oberhauser, who noted how women had to negotiate “their time and space to accommodate various activities and their multiple roles in the household” (166). Taking as a point of departure the principles of valuing and accounting for women’s work within and outside the home as critical factors in the subsistence and survival of the family, I discussed how this work in many ways was transparent and invisible due to the lack of monetary compensation, and the assumption that it was solely ‘women’s work.’ The three films which captured this dynamic the most clearly were *Retrato de Teresa*, *Gabriela*, and also *De Cierta Manera*. In *Retrato de Teresa*, I was able to observe Teresa’s struggle in trying to negotiate being a mother, a valuable employee in the textile factory and as an achieving community member by volunteering her time to coordinate and direct the textile workers dance ensemble. While the earlier scenes portrayed Teresa automatically carrying out the abundance of household chores, the later segments of the film presented her questioning her role within the home and within her marriage as she sought to assert a more equal distribution in household responsibilities between herself and Ramón. In *Gabriela*, we were able to understand how

through her lack of education, Gabriela's 'domestic status' did not change over the course of the film. Gabriela unlike Teresa, did not question her position as the cook and the server at Nacib's bar. Additionally, she did not seek to educate herself or learn more about the new community in which she lived as Macabéa did in *A Hora da Estrela*. As I argued, Gabriela became a 'model' in terms of what constituted the 'ideal' or 'valued' attributes for a Brazilian mulata woman. She appeared to enjoy her subservience socially and economically to Nacib, and other men viewed her more as an object than as an articulate woman that we could juxtapose with Teresa who was outspoken in public meetings.

In this chapter, I also discussed the work of Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias who observed how women were in fact essential in carrying out national policy and in constructing the idea of the nation. This concept could be applied to most of the films analyzed here, although especially in *De Certa Manera*, *Retrato de Teresa* and *Gabriela*. *A Hora da Estrela* was very critical of the state but, while being critical, it also showed the importance of women's struggles and personified them in Macabéa. There was also the discussion of Nira Yuval-Davis in "the politics of belonging" where we understood what it meant to 'belong' within a community and even more so, within a nation. Yuval-Davis underlined "who 'belongs' and who does not, and what are the minimum common grounds in terms of origin, culture and normative behavior that we are required to signify belonging" (207). We could see how this sense of belonging was essential towards the implementation of state policy. Yolanda and Mario, in *De Certa Manera*, clearly 'belonged' as true actors in a revolutionary regime. Yolanda was the ideal citizen, she was hardworking, loyal, and true to the revolutionary causes. She sought to improve the lives of children and future generations through education. Mario, on the other hand, may not have been as educated and proper as Yolanda and, although he seemed to be struggling, it was in the right

direction nonetheless like Yolanda, for the common good of the country. He saw a corrupt and deceitful co-worker and rather than lie and sacrifice the overall productivity of the other workers, he spoke up and made it known what Humberto had done.

I also discussed in this chapter the work of Michel Foucault via Stuart Hall. It was important to understand that “The subject can become the bearer of the kind of knowledge which discourse produces. It can become the object through which power is relayed. But it cannot stand outside power/knowledge as its source and author” (79). These concepts of power allowed me to examine the dynamics of power in almost all of the films. *Gabriela* stood out as a film where there was a clear division of power. Nacib acted out and exerted his power over Gabriela as he married her and hoped that, as a consequence, she would remain within the home and draw less attention from men in the community. Gabriela attempted to follow the ‘codes’ as mentioned by Gillian Rose and happily completed her duties, yet she never questioned the power structures that created her subservient position to Nacib. When told that she could no longer work at the bar, she accepted this readily. We see a similar scenario with Ramón and Teresa. Ramón like Nacib had internalized the value systems within his society and considered it unacceptable for Teresa to arrive at such a later hour while he stayed at home with their children. Therefore, he encouraged Teresa to remain within the home and perform her household duties as a ‘proper woman’ should.

In order to better understand these dynamics, I highlighted the political reality both within Cuba and Brazil, and hoped to show the correlation between the socio-economic realities in both countries with the development of the film industry. In discussing the development of the women’s movements in both countries, I pointed to the fact that Cuba made the improvement of women’s rights a crucial facet to the revolutionary agenda. Nevertheless this did not create an

egalitarian society; although there were significant changes in terms of women's improvements in education, and employment accessibility, deep seated societal misconceptions regarding gender roles have not changed. We saw this with "Julia" in 1990 who defined herself in relation to a man, although she tried to assert her independence. In the case of Brazil, women have also been limited by ascribed gender roles and 'codes' which established adequate behavior for a man, and appropriate behavior for a woman. I argued that the Brazilian feminist movement was successful in changing laws and improving conditions for women, like Cuba there were some limitations in terms of social attitudes, but as we can see with *A Hora da Estrela*, Brazil is much more progressive than Cuba in this area.

I drew from the theoretical discussions of Nira Yuval-Davis, Floya Anthias, Gillian Rose and Ann Oberhauser to explore how the transformations of the socio-political and economic structures impacted the household and the power relations within its members as well as the spaces occupied by women in the national project. I concluded by arguing that, although the films raised many interesting issues regarding women in Cuban society, the films were still victims to their times. Cuba was in many ways at the forefront as a nation not afraid to question women's issues and bring them to the mainstream. As Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias argues, women "are seen as participating centrally in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and as the transmitters of its culture" (7). This could be applied to the scene of Teresa's mother who was reinforcing a patriarchal discourse, and Teresa's inability to connect to some of the other women and express her problems with Ramón. Reflecting on the role of women in the process of oppression of other women, Denise M. Dipuccio affirms that:

Contrary to what one may believe, plays written by women about women are not inherently feminist. Female dramatists also run the risk of perpetuating sexist and elitist

values. This danger may be especially imposing when writing a historical piece about women who already have the reputation of being important or famous figures in their nations past. (225)

This points towards women themselves as actors in reinforcing patriarchal discourses which is often overlooked.

The persistence of a masculine perception of the nation based on ideas of heroism, courage, and loyalty are present in films such as *De Cierta Manera*, which captures this dynamics when it points to the way patriarchal values have remained and how certain historical narratives have attempted to erase women and their achievements. One example is when Mario made the very revealing statement that he behaved like a woman, because he did not defend his friend, and said “It’s men whom made the revolution anyway” and that he did not act like a man, rather as a woman. These statements contributed towards Gomez’s critique of a patriarchal paradigm, by having Mario explicitly state this, and captured the utter contradiction of Mario and of the revolution. In sum, by showing the impossibility of adjusting themselves to the prescribed roles, these women and men challenged discourses who had attempted to inscribe a certain *regime of truth* about the individuals as discussed by Foucault.

Finally, in the case of the Brazilian films, I drew upon theoretical discussions by Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias to reflect on the interrelations between discourses on gender and the nation. I concluded that, although the films depicted two female immigrants negotiating new spatial settings, Gabriela was constructed as the archetype of the sensuous Brazilian *morena*, while Macabéa was the polar opposite. Throughout the film and the novel, Brazil was exported as a tropical paradise replenished with sensual, attractive, and

sexually available women. The imaginary of the nation constructed within *Gabriela* was conservative and authoritarian, where women were restricted to the traditional roles and spaces as discussed by Yuval-Davis and Anthias. *Gabriela*, when compared to the other films of this analysis, was the least progressive in terms of its portrayal of women and their contestation of space. The film was primarily concerned with commercial success. Although the feminist movement was beginning to gain strength during this time, this was an issue left outside of the film content. In fact, the film reinforced the traditional values what is not unusual during times of societal questioning. *A Hora da Estrela*, on the other hand, defied Hollywood and mainstream cinema in every way possible, making it an innovative, insightful and highly creative film on many levels. Macabéa was repeatedly abused and mistreated throughout the film. She was contrary to the typical female protagonist.

Future Research:

Although the revolution brought many improvements in terms of education, health care, and improvements in the standard of living for many Cubans, there are still problems. In terms of film production, a positive aspect was that for directors it was easier to secure funding for film production because ICAIC was backed by the socialist government. On the other hand, because of the Castro regime, there are questions as to what extent there is artistic freedom for the directors. There is a clear correlation in Cuba prior to the “special period” between economic problems and limited film production. Film production was at its highest in the mid eighties. Few films were produced in the years immediately after the revolution, though soon after there was a noticeable increase. In the early 1990’s, there was a marked decrease and more recently, things

seem to have rebounded and film production seems to be nearly as high as it was in the mid eighties. Generally, about half of the Cuban films produced annually are divided between documentaries and fictional works. A serious problem which raises concern and points towards the many contradictions of the Revolution is the fact that Sara Gómez remains the sole female director of a full length feature film. This is a major issue that needs to be explored further. Although Gómez has been repeatedly applauded for her fictional work and the many documentaries she filmed, it is not clear how *she* was able to emerge from a system that has only produced one fictional full length film directed by a woman in forty-five years. There are several prominent female film directors who are creating documentaries, and some shorter fictional works; but at a time where in 2009 there was a total of 16 films produced, half of which were documentaries yet not a single fictional film is directed by a woman points towards a hierarchical structure within the film industry that is not providing equal opportunity nor access to women. Documentaries and shorter fictional works are not readily disseminated nationally or internationally. Women in Cuba need to be given chance to offer their perspective just as much as men have been able to.

In terms of the future of Brazilian film, things are more optimistic than they are for Cuba. There are several women engaged and participating in film direction such as Ana Carolina and Lucia Murat, just to name a few of many. A major problem seen in both countries but more so in Brazil is the financial cost to produce the films. Therefore, films are more likely to be commercially popular have an advantage over more experimental films in terms of securing financial support.

Film changes the way we see the world. By using feminist geography, we can more accurately understand the spatial dynamics between men and women and between firmly

entrenched power structures and women. This study hopes to have encouraged scholarship both in Feminist Geography and in Latin American Women's cinema, because women's voices should be heard and women's reality and perspective need to be accounted for. By conducting analyses such as this, we can have a deeper understanding of the ways women are represented in society and the how they negotiate spaces and power structures. We were also able to understand through this study the importance that women's representation has had in the construction of the Nation. For almost all of the films analyzed here, the 'image' of the women being portrayed has served a multifaceted purpose in presenting what the state deemed to be a positive image, or behavior. It is clear that film can have a profound impact on an individual and on a society, and on the ways these two spheres intersect. Only until we have more films such as *A Hora da Estrela* that push the boundaries and critique hegemonic power structures that both alienate women and those marginalized, can we achieve great things.

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